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How I Became King;

Or, My Lady of the Locket

By Leona Anstine Sutter

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CHAPTER I.

OUTSIDE, the baggagemen are scurrying hither and thither, the engines are puffing and scolding in the shadow of the gray St. Petersburg depot and, now and then, I can hear the departure of a train above the unintelligent gibberish of Russian spoken and shrieked on the platform.

I lean back in my compartment, puffing savagely away at a big, black cigar—you must picture a very irritable man—glad, heartily glad to be shaking the dust of the Russian capital from my feet; for I have been treated most unkindly by a woman, the dear, fascinating countess, the Varvaasa, who played with my heart as a child might play with a sawdust doll! She it was who picked me out of the entire throng at the embassy dinner, wooed me with her great, dark eyes in which it seemed to me a man might read the tragedies and the passions of centuries—they have tragic eyes, those high-class Russian women—and who called to me with her pouting, red lips from behind a trysting place of palms. Well, I went to those lips like a boy to a bunch of ripe cherries, and she played with me, tantalized me—you have seen the wind send the cherries bobbing just a bit out of reach? It was like that at first, a fascinating, panting chase through twenty drawing-rooms—and then she gave up her coquetry and yielded to my ardor like a bud in her first season, drove me mad with the sweetness and the abandon of a delicious intrigue!

Then while the sweet was still sweet and not a look or a whisper flavorless, he came back—her betrothed, the Grand Duke Alexeiev with his damnably-gleaming white teeth and his manicured moustache and his shining epaulets—and she threw me over as though those mad hours had never been with a scented note of farewell, a polite regret—not even a word to tell me that she chafed at the necessity.

In time I shall get over it—I always do—it is the happiest gift the gods gave me, the ability to forget! With it they gave me an ardor which would do credit to a Spaniard or an Italian, but is utterly out of place in a blond Englishman. I may as well confess it in the beginning, for otherwise this story had never been. I have never since my boyhood been proof against the fascinations of the other sex. I have lost my appetite over more than one woman, have undergone in each case all the throes of a virgin passion, and then have forgotten—well, as I shall forget the shape of this cloud of cigar smoke I blow into the air this instant.

"Constancy? Out upon it!
I have loved three whole days together!
And shall love taree more,
If it prove fair weather!"

"Yes—I shall forget you, beautiful Neva, as one forgets the fragrance of the rose plucked yesterday. Just now it may hurt infernally, but tomorrow—pouf—it shall be as though it had never been. Who can tell? perhaps some dowdy English girl shall replace you—they are dowdy, my countrywomen, but wholesome!

Thus I think, as I sit and gaze out through the steamy windows upon that foreign throng there on the platform—you should picture me with a little pucker between my brows, a certain listlessness of manner, a little hardness of the lips—when suddenly, there is a guttural command in Russian which corresponds to our English, "All aboard!" the wheels begin to revolve slowly, there is a warning whistle from the engine and—the door of my compartment is thrust open and a woman, heavily veiled, enters breathlessly and without apology. She sinks into the seat beside me without so much as, "By your leave." I am annoyed, for I have reserved the entire compartment for myself, but I am a gentleman. In a moment she raises her veil—the stranger—and I am glad that, though annoyed, I have been a gentleman—for she is very beautiful, that woman, almost as beautiful as the Varvaasa, but less mysteriously so. Her face is frank and open and honest and good-fellowship shines in it. I recall how very elegant her English, although her failure to abbreviate any words made it sound a trifle foreign.

"I beg your pardon, Lord Roland!" she said, dimpling, and I was too much astonished to notice the use of my name. "I shall intrude only for an instant. I leave the train and your compartment at the first stop. Before I leave I wish to entrust to you a package which I wish you, at all hazards, to get out of Russia. You are on your way to Paris—from there you go to London, I am informed. Very well—when you reach London you will immediately place the package in a safety deposit vault and think no more about it until you receive some directions as to its disposition. You may safely trust yourself to act upon any communication accompanied by the following arms and motto"—here she handed me a card which I gazed at curiously.

"In the meantime you will, of course, enjoy life after your usual manner."

At this condescension I was too astonished to make any reply. I put the card in my pocket and sat staring into the face of the fair, young woman beside me. "Indeed," I managed to ejaculate, "you are too good! I suppose it is part of this astonishing piece of melodrama that I shall know nothing about your identity or the contents of the package?"

She smiled slightly, showing very even white teeth.

"All this is of no importance, Lord Roland," she said. "However, you are quite at liberty to open the package and see its contents. Then you will see how important that they fall into no hands save those who have a right to them and yours. Still, I think it is my duty to tell you that the possession of the package is liable to bring you into grave danger before you reach London. I have ascertained that you are armed—well, then, I entreat you—guard the package with your life!"

I was completely overcome with the audacity of her speech! Was I to be drawn against my will into some wretched Russian intrigue?

"What reason have you for believing that I will accept this commission?" I asked, half of a mind to refuse absolutely and yet a little interested in the adventure.

"Because, Lord Roland," she answered, dimpling, "because you are a slave to a woman's eyes, a woman's beauty! I might say, perhaps, that you will do it because I, a very beautiful woman ask you, but I will give you a greater reason. It is because the welfare, the happiness, the life, perhaps, of the most beautiful woman in the world depends on how you execute your trust."

From the bosom of her dress she drew a great locket, a thing of gold and crusted jewels. She opened it and handed it to me.

"See if I have not spoken the truth when I said she was of all women most beautiful," she said. "This is she!"

I gazed, spellbound, at the beautiful face on the ivory. Such eyes, such hair, such lips! Surely such beauty could not exist, except in the inspired fancy of some great artist! I was silent for a few moments, wrapped in my contemplation of the strangely beautiful woman of the miniature, while something thrilled through every nerve.

"She lives! She is not some artist's dream, but a flesh and blood woman?" I asked softly.

"She lives and she is in danger, Lord Roland," she said, and I saw a mist of tears in her fine eyes. "It is very hard to see, for us who love her! Everything depends on how you execute your trust."

I was suddenly enthusiastic, entirely committed to the cause of these two beautiful women, whatever it was. "My life is at her service," I said softly, and I felt a warm pressure on my hand that thrilled me strangely and sweetly as though somehow in clasping hands with one who loved my lady of the locket, I was in a way drawn into intimacy with her.

The train was slowing down now and whistling as we rounded a curve. Dropping her veil, my companion prepared to depart.

"Would it help you to be brave in danger, executive in moments of peril, if I gave you the locket?" she asked.

Did she know how I had been longing to keep it—how loth I was to give it up?

"I think madame," I said, "that it would help me to die with a smile on my lips."

My companion handed me the miniature, drew from a black bag what appeared to be a box of cigars and handed it to me. The next moment she was gone and I staring after her.

My ticket had not yet been taken up and I dared not inspect the package for fear of detection. I hastily thrust it into my black seal bag.

Then I opened again the locket my strange companion had given me and gazed again with rapture upon that face, painted by the hand of some master upon the ivory. It was the face of a girl, a dimpling, smiling girl, and yet it struck me oddly that while a smile seemed to wreathe the entire countenance, the eyes did not smile at all. Some sorrow seemed to brood in their violet depths. The hair waved softly back from a high, white brow, and on the hair rested a jeweled tiara, and around her neck were great ropes of pearls that might be a king's ransom.

Who could she be? I knew the beautiful women of nearly every court of Europe, and yet to my positive knowledge I had never seen her face or picture of it.

The train was starting again—suddenly the door of my compartment was flung violently and impatiently open and two members of the gendarmerie entered. I saw that they were flushed and excited. They stared and stared at me, growing apoplectic with some emotion which I interpreted as surprise.

"The woman—what has become of her?" one of them asked, fastening his eyes upon me suspiciously.

"What woman?" I asked, and flattered myself at the carelessness and indifference of my tone. "I have seen no woman."

I lighted my cigar and leaned impudently back against the cushions.

"A woman entered this compartment at St. Petersburg," he said in Russian. "This I know positively. She did not leave the compartment at the depot nor yet at the first stop, yet she is not upon the train. What can have become of her?"

I felt a womanish desire to laugh at his perplexity.

"You are mistaken," I said patronizingly. "Not a woman have I seen since I entered this compartment. You see, you have been misinformed."

They were stupid fellows; still discussing the strangeness of the affair, they turned upon their heels and left. It was my turn to be surprised. They had stated positively that the woman who was seen to enter my compartment had not left the train at the first stop. If they were looking for her, as they evidently were, I could not see how they could have missed her, for in all probability she would have been the only person to leave the train. Still, since they were evidently such stupid fellows, it might not have been hard to elude them. Wondering not a little at the strangeness of this new development, I closed my eyes and leaned back against the cushions lost in thought.

CHAPTER II.

It was in my rooms at the hotel in Paris that I first found opportunity to investigate the contents of the package that had been handed to me by the woman on the train. It was with a little thrill of keen anticipation that I welcomed the first moment in which it seemed to me safe to open the box. It was closed with tiny tacks, like the ordinary box of cigars, but when I withdrew them I found within, closely fitting the inside of the cigar box, a box of gold of curious workmanship and wonderfully carved by hand. A crown was outlined upon the lid in rubies, and just above it appeared the motto that had been written upon the card the lady had given me.

"Constans, fides et integritus."

On the top of the box there was a tiny golden key. With hands that trembled not a little I fitted it in the lock, turned it and raised the lid. With an exclamation of awe and wonder I stood and gazed and gazed upon the contents of the box. It was filled with unset jewels, diamonds, emeralds and rubies of marvelous size and fineness, such gems as I had never seen among the crown jewels of any country, and blazing in their center a great, red stone of brilliance such as never came from any ruby, and of marvelous size. I knew it, being somewhat of a connoisseur in gems, to be a red diamond, one of the very few in existence, but five times as large as any I had ever seen or heard of. There was not another such diamond in existence, of that I was positive, for I had been interested enough to learn the whereabouts of every red diamond of any size discovered.

I considered a red diamond the most beautiful stone in existence, and had felt a personal enthusiasm over every one found. How had the existence of this priceless jewel escaped the knowledge of those who owned the great jewel collections of the world? This was not the only stone of marvelous size. There were diamonds weighing thirty carats, several of them, and not a gem among them all under five carats in size. The more I handled the glittering gems, the more positive I became that I had in my possession a collection of jewels far excelling any known to be in existence, but all of them together were hardly worth in my eyes as much as the huge, red diamond blazing among them.

I felt as though I had suddenly been taken to view the treasures of some Aladdin's cave, and then I became a little afraid. What efforts would not be made to discover the whereabouts of such a treasure, a treasure that it was inevitable should interest many? For such a treasure wars might be fought and kingdoms overthrown. A hundred might be undertaking the search for them even now. I let them trickle through my fingers, gloating over their beauty, gluttonously viewing them for a few moments. Then I closed the lid of the box, locked it and enclosed it again in the cigar box.

Walking over to my bag I took out a brace of pistols, loaded them and laid them on the mantel, strangely thrilled with the marvelousness of this adventure that had befallen me, and feeling a little more of a man that such a trust had been placed in me.

I think I had laid my hand a trifle dramatically over my heart close to which lay the locket with my lady's picture. "I'll guard the treasure with my life, fair one, with my life!" I whispered.

I felt suddenly at a loss to know what to do with them—I dare not leave them behind in the room—so much was certain—and I did not care to place them in the hotel safe. Yet, it seemed very hazardous to carry them with me. Finally, however, I decided to place them in my overcoat pocket and take the chances—a man is ill-content to remain in his room the first night he spends in Paris after many months. I had not yet reached the stage of posing where one blushes to be found dining at The Black Cat, and I had resolved to dine there, later remaining to see the Eugenie dance. Once more I would be steeped in the joyousness of Paris—then London!

I donned my evening clothes with some difficulty—my man had been taken suddenly ill and left behind in St. Petersburg—realizing all at once what Albert did for me, and yet not sorry that he had been left behind. He was a faithful enough fellow, apparently, but one never knows how much one may trust a servant.

When I was at last ready I donned my dress coat, slipped one revolver into the capacious overcoat pocket, and the precious cigar box into the other.

A few moments later my carriage arrived. My apprehensions began to wear off before I had crossed the floor of the great entrance to the hotel. This was friendly, well-known Paris. In St. Petersburg one might scent mystery and fear surprises and dark conspiracy, but not here in the midst of lights and laughter and gayety.

The great doors of the hotel were thrown obsequiously open, my carriage called and "to The Black Cat," I said.

I sprang into the carriage and the door closed after me. I gazed upon the brilliant streets, at peace with myself and the world. A good dinner was ahead of me—then I should see the Eugenie dance. In far away St. Petersburg I had heard of her wonderful dancing. "She is the dance incarnate," Alexeiev had said.

Suddenly I came to myself with a start and realized that we had turned into a dark side street, which I did not know, but I saw that we were leaving the "Black Cat" behind. I shouted this information to the cabman through the door of the cab, but he paid no attention. I lost my temper—I am of a hot-headed race.

"D——n you—where are you taking me?" I screamed.

The driver's only reply was to whip up his horses and we were soon tearing madly through the dark street. He seemed, if I had not heard the whip descending, to have lost control of the brutes, that appeared to be bent on dashing the carriage to pieces upon the pavement. A sudden inexplicable terror seized me. I thought of the treasure I carried with me. On we went like the wind! It was impossible to tell my whereabouts, though I knew Paris well. Obeying a sudden impulse, I flung open the door of the cab and leaped into the night. I was hurled with terrible force upon the pavement and rose with the blood dripping into my eyes from a nasty cut in my forehead. As I rose another carriage, the horses apparently running away, swept past me in the darkness. I did not like my position at all—alone in a dark and unknown side street, and with such a treasure! I felt sure that I had been the victim of some sort of conspiracy which I had only defeated by leaping from the carriage.

To the north I could see a line of lights, and I started to walk briskly toward them, stanching the blood from the cut in my forehead as best I could with my handkerchief. I had walked about a block when I heard wheels behind me, and recognized the lights of a street cab poking leisurely along in the darkness. The leisureliness of the pace convinced me that it was not driven by the cabman I had so unceremoniously quitted a few moments before. I hailed him. He paused, got down from the box and I could see him regarding me curiously through the feeble glare of the lamps.

"Where to, monsieur?" he asked.

"I wish to go to the 'Black Cat.'" I said. Touching his hat politely, he flung open the door of the carriage and I got in.

CHAPTER III.

It was good to be dining again in Paris after months of pleasures in a land where they seem to stalk hand in hand with tragedy. I had felt keenly the gloom of the great Russian capital. Only the fascination of the Countess Varvaasa had kept me there at all. We live in the open too much, we English, to relish plots and intrigue.

The countess? You will recall that I said that I would forget her—still, I did not expect to forget so soon. Already her great, dark, tragic eyes that drew me so irresistibly, have lost their spell. They cannot follow me here to Paris, even where women's eyes beckon just as brightly on every hand, if they leave you less to guess. Yet, neither is there any charm for me in Parisian eyes—already I am a slave of a pair of great, violet eyes seen only in a picture, eyes in which there is no hint of mystery, but which are frankly, childishly sorrowful.

"Who has hurt you, my lady of the miniature?" I think. "You were not meant for sorrow, you were meant for smiling. I can see how your face dimples and smiles in spite of your eyes. Yet she said you were in danger!"

As I recall the word my fingers tighten upon the stem of my wine glass, threatening to sever the fragile thing. So soon, she shuts the world out, this Lady of the Locket, as though in all the world there were no other woman. My pulses sing for her, my blood pounds through my arteries with unaccustomed fervor because of her. You, who have heard me confess my weakness where the other sex are concerned may smile your little smile of superiority, but I tell you that this sensation was as new to me as the first rush of air to a child's lungs. In all the women I have fancied at times I loved, I but paid tribute to the universal sex. Each little fascination of the other sex was but a promise to me of one who should possess them all. I feel sure that this is she—my Lady of the Miniature—that when I see her I shall love her as a man loves but once in a lfetime—with a master passion—and if she send me away I shall not forget—the tragedy of it will be that I shall not forget!

It is a very interesting cafe, the Black

(Continued on page three.)

WORTH MOUNTAINS OF GOLD

During Change of Life, says Mrs. Chas. Barclay

Graniteville, Vt. — "I was passing through the Change of Life and suffered from nervousness and other annoying symptoms, and I can truly say that Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has proved worth mountains of gold to me, as it restored my health and strength. I never forget to tell my friends what Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound has done for me during this trying period. Complete restoration to health means so much to me that for the sake of other suffering women I am willing to make my trouble public so you may publish this letter." — MRS. CHAS. BARCLAY, R.F.D., Graniteville, Vt.

No other medicine for woman's ills has received such wide-spread and unqualified endorsement. No other medicine we know of has such a record of cures of female ills as has Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

For more than 30 years it has been curing female complaints such as inflammation, ulceration, local weaknesses, fibroid tumors, irregularities, periodic pains, backache, indigestion and nervous prostration, and it is unequalled for carrying women safely through the period of change of life. It costs but little to try Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, and, as Mrs. Barclay says, it is "worth mountains of gold" to suffering women.

VALUABLE ITEM FOR MEN.

If you want to be strong and vigorous and enjoy to the fullest possibility the great natural functions with which nature has endowed you, then you should follow the treatment outlined by one who has grown immensely wealthy by curing the shipwrecks amongst the four hundred's fast livers.

The treatment is said to have acquired a wonderful reputation even in the hospitals and sanitariums throughout the east owing to its peculiar propensity to fortify the sexual nerve force, and generate personal magnetism, so essential to the happiness of every normal human being. It is claimed to be a blessing for the premature aged, the weak, gloomy, despondent, nervous wrecks of men, who have trembling of the limbs, dizziness, heart palpitation, cold blood, insomnia, drains and imperfect functions of the urinary and generative systems. Also of great benefit to writers, professional men, overworked office men, victims of late hours and sufferers from nervous debility.

Mixing it at home secretly, no one need know of another's trouble while the ingredients are often used for various other prescriptions.

If the reader decides to try it, get three ounces of ordinary syrup sarsaparilla compound, and one ounce compound fluid balmwort; mix, and let stand two hours; then get one ounce compound essence cardiol and one ounce tincture cadomene compound; mix all together, shake well and take a teaspoonful after each meal and one when retiring.

Most druggists keep these ingredients on hand. If they cannot be readily procured, the Prescription Products Co., 203 Summit street, Dayton, Ohio, who prepare guaranteed extracts, essences, etc., especially for prescription filling, will doubtless supply them.

Real Sport.

The housewife looked at the tramp suspiciously.

"My man," she said, sternly, "what are you doing in those riding boots and that tattered red jacket?"

"Ah, lady," said the wayfarer as he tipped his cap, "I belong to a hunt club."

"Indeed! And are you hunting foxes?"

"No, mum; I'm hunting a meal."

A CHANCE TO MAKE MONEY.

By request we reprint the following:

I read a recent article about a woman who invested $420 in improving a Mexican Homestead and is now getting a regular income of over $1,200 a year from the sale of bananas from her orchard. I am glad to say that I know this can be done. You can get a Homestead in Mexico free, and do not have to live on it. All that is required is to have 1,000 banana trees planted within five years, and the Improvement Department will prepare the land, supply and plant the trees and care for them until they come into bearing, for about $600. You can pay this in installments of $5.00 a month, and in three years after your trees are planted they will bring you a profit of more than $1,500 each year, if you superintend the work; but if you wish, the Improvement Department will care for the trees and market your bananas continuously, so you will not have to be in Mexico at all; they get one-third of the crop for attending to and marketing the bananas. This will give you a profit of more than $1,000 a year, from an investment of about $600. If you act as your own superintendent you can make $500 a year more. I know this from my own experience. It is a delightful country, never hot, never cold, and the health conditions are perfect. For full information address The Jantha Plantation Co., Block 221, Pittsburg, Pa., as all English literature pertaining to these free Mexican Homesteads is distributed from Pittsburg.

What We May Expect.

"Roosevelt is going to carry a phonograph and get a record of all the noise in the jungle," said Billy.

"Gee, how funny!" mused Jimmy. "I guess after he comes back you can walk into a store and say, 'Mister, give me a canned elephant's voice.'"

Cook Book Free.

Every reader of this paper will receive free of charge a copy of Delicious Desserts Cook Book by simply writing to the Price Flavoring Extract Co., 254 Illinois St., Chicago. This book is a handy thing for every home. It contains directions for making all kinds of cakes, puddings, desserts and dainty dishes. This generous offer of a free copy should be accepted by every reader.

Not Often Out.

Gunner—Yes, that great baseball player was married last week.

Guyer—So? Any change in him?

Gunner—Not a bit! He is running and sliding for home more than ever.

LADIES, PRESERVE YOUR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE.

Madame Mignette's Beauty Cream and Skin Food removes every defect, spot, freckle, pimple, blemish or wrinkle, leaving the skin soft, clear and smooth. It is perfectly harmless and will not injure the most delicate skin. It preserves and brings back the youthful glow to the face and ruddiness to the cheeks, preserving it in this condition until extreme old age. This preparation has been used for years and hundreds are now using it and are more than delighted with the results. Send us ten (10) cents for formula which you can have filled at any drug store at a very small cost. Do not delay, but write at once. Box 491, Blairsville, Pa.

Different Purses.

Pearl—This poet says a really pretty girl must have a purse in her lips.

Ruby—Oh, pshaw! You can't buy an ice-cream soda with that kind of purse.

(Continued from page two.)

Cat, a little sombre with its heavy, black oak, its massive, broad tables, high wainscoting and great rafters, but this is offset by the immense fireplace and the richly-colored panels of the wall, in which Steinlen, that most original of the Parisian illustrators, has surpassed himself. So odd and bizarre is this cafe that it does not strike you as peculiar to see black cats racing over the ocean, waltzing with naiads in the woods or whirling through space followed by boulevardiers in merry pursuit. They spit at you from the stained-glass windows, these uncanny animals, grin at you like Cheshires from among the pewter pots, and the spirit of it all is refreshing and Parisian and—different.

At a neighboring table, a girl challenges me with eyes that are more merry than wanton. We are adventurers all—two days ago I should have gone to her, but tonight I can see only the eyes of my lady in danger. She will not care if I drink her a toast tonight, wherever she is in the world. I raise my glass, watch for a moment the bead upon the crimson wine, and drain it to a toast that is half a prayer.

"Monsieur will have more wine?"

The waiter brings the frapped bottle of burgundy closer to that table. It is a priceless wine, but I must keep my head clear—for who knows after my marvelous adventure in the cab what may befall me?

"Take it, and drink it with your sweetheart," I answer, knowing that only once in a lifetime will he taste such wine. "I have quite finished. Bring me my cigars, my coffee and my cordial."

The adventurous eyes at the next table are challenging elsewhere now, but they turn to me a moment later, with frank good nature as I rise. I immediately seek the stairs, leading up to the little theater. It is an innovation, this dance of the Eugenie, and promises to be far more entertaining than the usual amateur play.

I have wasted a good deal of time in the little drug-place next door, having the cut in my head dressed before dining and it is late. I am the last to enter the theater. I enter my box quietly and have barely time to be seated when the little dancer enters. She is very petite, the Eugenie, and yet somehow wonderfully voluptuous. She came upon the stage to the hiss of the strange music, dressed in a gown of green scales. As she writhed her way across the platform—I can call it nothing less but writhing, that sinuous, coiling movement—the illusion of a snake was complete. In the front of the stage she paused, twisted her body strangely like a snake in the act of coiling, and stood motionless, her tiny head poised, her black eyes alert, seeming ready for the spring. The music was so soft now that the ears could scarcely follow it—it was rather the ominous silence of danger. There was a queer rattle, that not until long afterward did I attribute to the man in the orchestra at the drum, and which in the realism of the moment I shuddered at. The dancer strained her neck forward just a little, there was another hiss of the music, another rattle of the drum and then a storm of music like a cry of terror and pain, and the applause broke forth. It was wonderfully done. It seemed to me that I could feel the perspiration start upon my brow at the horror of it, and yet it was art—such art as I have never seen upon the stage. I was overwhelmed at the pliancy of that graceful body, and I applauded heartily as the rest, although there was something very distasteful to me in it all.

She was a butterfly next—the Eugenie—a thing of gorgeous, orange-colored wings, a flitting, darting thing against a background like some garden of the giants, looking very tiny as she flitted in and out among the flowers, so grotesquely large and yet not striking one as large until long afterward. As I watched her it seemed to me that I watched a butterfly—a tiny, helpless butterfly with wings as airy and light as any that ever flew among flowers. I could not realize that the mere shifting of a curtain, a setting of the stage helped to create the illusion.

She was in succession a swallow, dragonfly, a winged victory an angel floating skyward in a mist of white draperies, and in each case, owing to the wonderful mechanism of the stage-settings, the splendid art of the dancer, the illusion was perfect.

Then the curtain dropped for a few moments. When Eugenie next appeared she was a nymph. She came upon the stage in a clinging white thing that revealed every curve of her graceful body—a body that was grace itself. The music was dreamy and soft and passionate, music to start a man's blood racing through his veins more swiftly, to send a warm glow tingling over him. I watched the undulating, girlish body with a heat of which I felt strangely ashamed, then I forgot everything in my awe of the thing which I saw done upon the stage before me. I had tantalizing glimpses of every primitive emotion intensified a hundred times it seemed to me. The Eugenie was a nymph pursued and afraid—there was a mad flight from the passion she incited, a caprice that made her look back at her pursuer, a sensuous pleasure in his fairness revealed in every inviting curve of her, a melting of her fears, a yielding that sent her flying on, but fearless. Love overtakes her—she yields—torments even as she yields—you saw passion held at bay. Faster and more furious grew the music—before it had been capricious as the dancer—now it was wild and intense as befitted the climax of a great passion. The Eugenie was no longer the pursued—the capricious—the frightened virgin—she was a woman undulating in her lover's arms—pliant, overcome. There was wild, exultant joy in her dancing, superlative passion, abandon such as men only dream of.

On—on—on went the dance! My eyes were strained to catch every maddening line of that form that allured and promised and denied in the fury of the dance. My blood was pounding in my veins, I was only a man and witness of elemental passions, swept away from my anchor out into the sea of the senses. I knew suddenly what Alexeiev meant when he said that she was the dance incarnate, she was more, she was every emotion of human life incarnate.

The music changed—passion was satiate—the low notes, the alluring dance became caresses to quench the fever the dancer had awakened. The curtain fell. I rose from my seat in the box, shaken like a reed in the wind by the sweep of my tingling emotions, mastered by the primitive crouching in me. As I left the box a note was handed to me. It was very brief.

"Dear Lord Roland—I saw you in the box just now—I danced for you. Will you come to my apartments in the next block, in half an hour. My servant will be waiting at the east door to take you there. EUGENIE."

I hope you will not think less of me that for an instant the note set my pulses beating with mad pleasure, that I forgot everything in my desire to confront this woman alone and to snatch from her the sweets she offered. I am a man and as other men and it seemed to me that I had been present at the dawn of sensation. I walked on air out through the door of the theater impatient of every moment that kept me from this glorious woman, who had driven sensation-surfeited Paris mad. A cold blast of air hurled itself against my fevered cheek. I saw again the face of the miniature—so sweetly pure, so purely sweet, the great, violet eyes with their vague sorrow. The thought of her was like a taste of cool water to parched lips. I was no longer scorched with the sordid, but somehow uplifted—better. I had a page find me a carriage. When it came I gave the order that I be driven straight to my hotel.

This I reached safely and without any more nerve-racking experience. I went at once to my room, and throwing off coat and vest, donned smoking jacket and slippers and sat down near the grate to smoke my pipe and reflect on the strangeness of all that had befallen me.

I had no doubt that the ride in the cab had been but a foretaste of those events of which the stranger in the train had warned me. I was curious to know what would have happened if I had not leaped from the cab. The carriage that passed me in the darkness may have been filled with men, and I would have been overtaken in a very lonely street.

Well, tomorrow I would leave for London, and the jewels would be safe after that and I should breathe a long sigh of relief. It is too hard upon the nerves to be carrying about a treasure that one knows surpasses any in existence and carrying them in one's overcoat pocket at that!

Suddenly my eye fell upon the evening paper lying upon a mahogany table near by. I reached for it mechanically, glanging at the head-lines—the next I was holding it with hands that trembled a little and staring at a brief dispatch I found there with fascinated eyes.

CHAPTER IV.

"THE TREASURE OF THE HOUSE OF ETHABERT STOLEN!"

This was the heading of the dispatch that left me staring with fascinated eyes. The dispatch in brief was as follows, and to me full of thrilling interest:

"The treasure of the House of Ethabert, said to contain the most magnificent red diamond in the world, has been stolen, the jewels torn from their settings and apparently spirited out of the country.

"There was recently great excitement in Tasmalia, when the lost jewels of the reigning house were discovered in the excavation of certain ruins, where they had apparently been buried since the occupancy of the capital, Bokkok, by the Turks. The rejoicing was all the greater as there has long been a superstition among the peasants that the loss of the red diamond has been responsible for an era of bad times and political disturbance. The people of Tasmalia are very fond of their young queen, recently crowned upon the death of her father, and looked upon the finding of the jewels as a sign that she would be victorious in her trouble with the Grand Duke Alexeiev, of Russia, who aspires to the throne. Wild excitement prevails throughout the kingdom at the theft of the jewels, probably the most magnificent collection extant; the queen is prostrated and scarcely able to handle the political situation which grows more difficult every day. The Russians continue to pour into the country, and the growing insufferance of these paid hirelings of Alexeiev will soon precipitate hostilities. Alexeiev is much hated by the people of Tasmalia, but is backed in his pretensions to the throne by the reigning house of Russia, not openly, but to an extent that makes the situation look very hopeless to the people of Tasmalia, who are universally loyal to the queen."

I had known a little of the political situation in Tasmalia, it was discussed a little in diplomatic circles in St. Petersburg, but I had not been particularly interested. There is always some sort of a revolution going on in the smaller kingdoms of Europe and little attention is paid to them.

Now I was strangely certain that I had in my possession the lost treasure of Tasmalia. Why I had them, for what purpose they were being taken out of the country, remained a mystery. As to which side, if either, I was aiding, I could only speculate.

It was certain that I should go no farther if I believed that I was aiding Alexeiev, he of the gleaming teeth and the insufferable arrogance, and yet Varvaasa had probably told him that I was a man to be trusted. I clenched my hands and my lips grew hard at the thought that was forming itself in my brain. Was all the attention, the coquetry of Varvaasa, but given for the sake of ascertaining how I could best aid Alexeiev, or whether I could aid him at all?

This being so, who, then, was my Lady of the Miniature, she, whom the stranger said was in danger? Was she some trumped up creature of Alexeiev, having no existence except in some artist's fancy and cunningly made use of by the hireling of the Russian, who had learned my weakness from the lips of Varvaasa, she in whose hands I had been as wax? Was I, Lord Roland, acting the part of a puppet for a Russian I despised, lured on, held faithful by a myth and a picture, together representing nothing more than a fiction created by the pretender to the throne of Tasmalia?

As I pictured the conspiracy into which I was half-convinced I had been drawn and which I should loathe, I was shaken with anger. I puffed away at my meerschaum, and romance played with me. Fantastic thoughts chased each other across my brain. In real romance, my Lady of the Miniature would be Queen of Tasmalia, and I should be serving her with the pleasant result that she would fall in love with me and marry me as a reward for my services, but instead, she was prostrated in her palace because I was carrying away her jewels, and she might be forty-five and plain and impossible. Romance is relegated to the past ages.

Suppose for a moment that I was serving Alexeiev—how much that was unexplainable in my experience at St. Petersburg became explainable, the purpose in all the scheming sweetness of Varvaasa, the courtesy of Alexeiev to a rival!

Underneath all this reflection clamored an argument that I was fain to listen to, the argument of the frank, tear-filled eyes of the lady who gave me the miniature when she said her friend was in danger. Could those tears be faked? I was slowly learning that there is nothing easier than for a woman to fake emotion. Why, I had seen tears of emotion in the eyes of Varvaasa she would have had me believe sincere, and yet she threw me over with a perfumed note.

But, at least, this much the argument did, it manacled me. While there remains one shred of belief that the story of the woman who gave me the treasure is true, there is nothing that I can do but be faithful to my trust. Alexeiev has planned well if the plan is his.

Very bewildered, a prey to conflicting emotions, I made ready to retire. One of the last things I did was to examine the locks upon the two doors. There were bolts on the doors as well as locks. One door opened into the hall. Crossing the room to the other I pushed aside the bolt and opened it. I looked into an empty room that could be made ensuite with my room, but which, on account of the crowded condition of the hotel, I had not been able to obtain. The occupant had evidently not yet come in. I closed it and bolted it upon the inside, taking this precaution also with the other door and the windows. Then I placed the treasure and a revolver under my pillow and turned off the lights.

I was soon fast asleep and dreaming sweet dreams in which my Lady of the Miniature smiled at me from a golden throne, with eyes from which all the trouble had vanished. As slumber deepened, my dreams grew sweeter and more intimate. I held my lady in my arms, her cheek close to mine. Upon her breast she wore a rose, the fragrance of which was overpoweringly sweet. I shall never forget the fragrance of that rose—it was like an opiate in its effect upon me. It grew stronger and stronger, stealing my consciousness, my head dropped upon my lady's breast, I struggled with the emotions, the world seemed filled with the now hateful fragrance—I awoke suddenly—in terror snatched something from my face, a mask of white. In the room there was the faintly, sickening odor of a drug. Half-awake I leapt from the bed. All was silent and dark! Seized with a terrible fear I turned on the lights and reached under my pillow. The treasure was gone!

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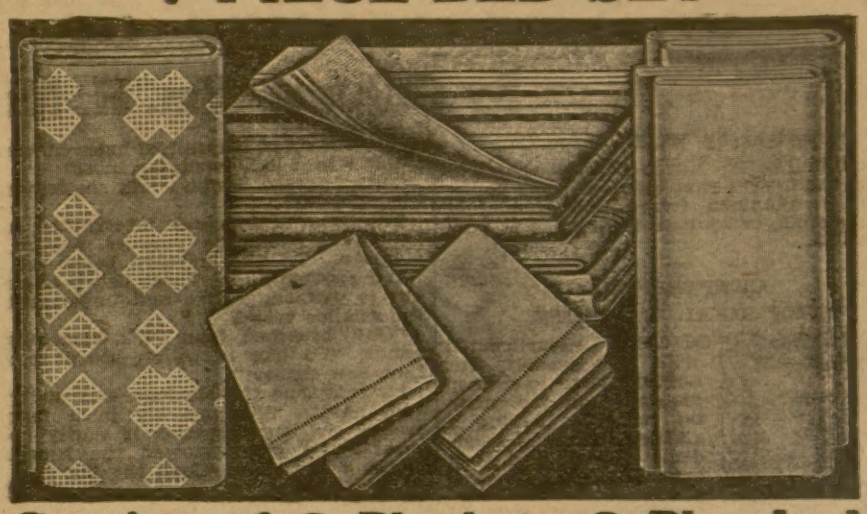

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"So!" grunted the old farmer, laconically. "What did yeou larn, boy?"

"Lots, pop. Why, I am so far advanced I can split a hair and tell how much each half weighs."

The old farmer got out his big, red ax.

"That so? Wal, take this ax and split a cord of wood and tell how much each half weighs and then, by heck, I'll say that yeour eddication hasn't been in vain."

And sometimes a poet fools people by wearing his hair short.

The Lighthouse Heir;

Or, THE SECRET OF THE REEF.

By Colonel Wm. H. Manning.

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE RIVAL WARSHIPS.

RODLEY experimented with his musket, but nothing could long keep his gaze from the outlying waters. Taking a glance that way, he suddenly started and then bent closer to the window.

"What's that?" he cried. "The yards of the warship are swarming with men, and it looks——"

"Zounds!" exclaimed John Dick, "they are spreading sails! What the deuce does that mean?"

Rodley had brought the glass to bear.

"All is confusion on board!" he added. "Men run to and fro on deck, and the crew aloft work like madmen. It surely looks like getting the vessel under sail. Men, they must have had an alarm! Can an American vessel have appeared off the coast? Would that we could see beyond the headland!"

"You have hit it!" said the castaway jubilantly. "It's an alarm, sure enough, and they are going in hot haste."

"But, their shipmates in the boat?"

"Will be left behind. No time to pick them up. If the ship delays for them it will meet the peril that is unseen by us. Ha, my bold meteors of the winter skies, we shall not have the warship to fight just yet!"

It certainly looked like it. Canvas was going up as expeditiously as the sailors could handle gaskets, halyards and sails, and the brig was being transformed. Midway between the craft and the lighthouse was a different picture. The Mexicans in the boat had seen the confusion, and, perhaps, its cause, and they had ceased to row. Resting on their oars, they seemed to be both surprised and dismayed by the predicament which confronted them. But only briefly.

Again the oars were dipped, again they started toward the light.

"Thunder!" gasped Bayou. "We've got to fight them after all!"

Before more could be said, a second vessel appeared beyond the cape, and Bayou uttered a cheer as it was seen that the stars and stripes flew at her mast-head. All was as they had suspected; the Mexicans, intent on their prey in the lighthouse, had been so surprised that, not daring to fight, they were hastening to flee from a more powerful warship, and in that rush for safety their shipmates in the boat were to be deserted.

John Dick chuckled merrily.

"The foe that could bully us with impunity is going to get her own stomach filled now!" he commented. "The Yankee craft will shoot her full of holes unless she skips with a light-waltzing foot!"

"Yes," agreed Rodley, "but she leaves behind her——"

The boom of a cannon interrupted, and a ball flew from the pursuer toward the Mexican. Off the larboard beam the sea-water spurted high. There had been no hit, but it was suggestive and unpleasant for the smaller vessel.

"Oh!" breathed John Dick, clenching his hands, "I'd like to be on board to sight that bow-chaser!"

By this time the Mexican was under sail and, having filled quickly in a favoring breeze, she began footing it slowly up the coast. The glass showed the Americans working lustily to reload the big gun, but Rodley lowered the instrument and fixed his gaze anew on the boat.

Under Lieutenant Marcos' direction the crew were pulling doggedly for the light, and every dip of the blades brought the danger nearer to the keepers. The armed portion of her complement seemed to hold their guns with ostentatious show, and it needed only a few minutes more to bring them within firing distance.

"Make ready!" directed Rodley. "The warships have their affair to look out for, and we have ours. I hope our guns will carry farther than theirs; that's what we must decide."

"If they don't, them fellers will shoot our lanterns to glory-be!" exclaimed Bayou.

"Say!" added John Dick, who had picked up the glass, "here's a diversion! The Yankee craft has trained one of her broadside guns on the boat. There is about one chance in a hundred of a hit at that distance, but she may give the boatmen a scare—Aha!"

The cannon thundered, and the missile flew toward the boat.

"A hit!" shouted John Dick vociferously.

Rodley snatched the glass away without ceremony and leveled it on the boat. Something had surely happened there. The crew were on their feet, and the craft was tipping, the bows high in air and the stern sinking. Then, before more could be said, the confusion increased and the crew were floundering in the water, with no boat at their command.

Luck, or good aim had given the American gunner one chance in many. The cannon-ball had just reached the boat, and, without injuring any man there, had shaved the extremity of the stern away as a knife might cut cheese. Sternless, the boat went down swiftly.

"Oh!" cried John Dick, for he could see enough with the naked eye to tell him the story, "how is that, my riders of the forked lightning? Mister Marcos isn't so cocksure now! See them dance in the plankless sea!"

"They take it coolly!" pursued Rodley. "System begins to show. What will they do? They might swim here, but they would be mad to do it. We could pick off every man of them."

"They start for shore."

"They can make that, too. Not so hard a swim, and they all appear at home in the water."

"Worse yet, they carry their muskets."

"There is the dickens of it!" snapped Rodley. "Their ship is gone, and she will either have a long race of it to get clear, or will be captured by that lusty Yankee. Meanwhile, Marcos and his men are left on this coast, and we have seen that they are stubbornly set in their ways. There will be no safety for Black Reef Light while they are hereabouts."

"There is a reprieve, anyhow."

"We needn't be afraid of them no more," said Bayou. "They can't shoot us from land, an' their boat is gone."

Rodley meditated on the situation and then suddenly started.

"Bayou," he cried, "I want you to go ashore!"

"Wh-wh-what? Go ashore? Sartain, if you say so, sah. But why?"

"As soon as those fellows get there they will aspire to secure a boat, and they will draw on some fisherman, with or without his leave. Go ashore, boy, and tell the three fishermen who are near what the situation is. Say that the light is menaced; that the Mexicans wish to shoot the lanterns to pieces——"

"Can you rely on those fishermen?" interrupted John Dick.

"To the death! Every man of them thinks that, next to drawing his individual breath of life, it is the most important thing in the world that the light burns. They will be with us, mind and heart. Tell them, Bayou, to run their boats into some bush-fringed arm of the bay and hide it there. Hasten! The swimmers have disappeared beyond the north cape, and they will be on shore in ten minutes. Down with our boat!"

There was a rush to the crane, and in a short time the boat was down and Bayou within it and pulling zealously for land.

Then Rodley bethought himself of the warships. Twice the cannon of the pursuer had boomed while they had themselves been occupied. Now, again leveling the glass, he saw that the Mexican had disappeared behind the outer cape, and that the American, still intent on firing her bow-chaser, was forging that way as fast as her snowy sails could take her.

"All over!" said John Dick lightly.

"You forget that the men under Marcos are almost within gunshot of us, and will remain there."

"Fact!" agreed the castaway more soberly. "Let us not underrate the danger. They count nine head!"

"And we are but three. If we had only our lives to think of I would bank on these stone walls in front of us and laugh at the odds in their favor, but that is not the point—they will hunger to shoot away the lights, and we shall be compelled to use constant vigilance to beat them off!"

"Fact!"

"I hope they will not find any boat when they land."

"That scheme of hiding the boats is all right, and well thought of, but, love ye, what's to prevent their building a raft? They can come off as well that way as by a regular boat."

"I have not been forgetful of that possibility, but you will see that it is not so bad as a boat. A raft is clumsy, slow and—still, it can be shot from. If they do build a raft we shall have trouble."

"They will build one. That is, if they fail to find a boat. Find one! They will know the fishermen have such things and have hidden them. They will search, and if they don't find, they are dull pates."

"If they do," retorted Rodley, with cool resolution, "we will fight it out with them."

"Another thing! Suppose they get possession of the cannon that the hill-folks stole from the wreck?"

Rodley was silent. He had forgotten the cannon. Recollection of it rather staggered him.

"An expert gunner could blow this lighthouse to chaos!" added John Dick.

"We will wait until they get the cannon," answered the keeper, with a return of firmness. "The Mexicans have no love for the hill-folks. I doubt that any comradeship will be established between them, although the cannon may be captured by Marcos and used."

"Well," added John Dick cheerfully, "I won't conjure up any more dismal shapes. I glory in your grit, my able seaman of the tossing deep, and you can count on me to back you up. I'll fight by your side to the last, and a murrain to the whole blamed gang! They will find——"

"We've got to have those muskets of theirs!" interrupted Rodley, vehemently.

"How will we get them?"

"I am going ashore," said the keeper. "I must have their guns!"

John Dick was a bold man, but he looked staggered by this scheme.

"How will you get them?" he asked. "They won't give them up on demand, and as for stealing them, if that's your plan, it is no easy task to go among nine men and despoil them of their guns."

"There are, we think, but four muskets. One man could carry all at once, if he had them. If he had them! There is the rub. Still, there is no choice. As you have said, they can build a raft, paddle this way, and then shoot away our lamps. We can ignore the cannon for a while, but not the small arms. I am supposed not to leave this lighthouse at night, but this case is out of the common."

"Nine of them, messmate! It will be infernal dangerous work. If they get an eye on you they will shoot you full of holes. Are you bound to go?"

"I am!"

"Let me go with you."

"No! I want you here with the negro to guard the light. There may be fighting here while I am away. I go alone."

"To tackle nine men?"

"To steal their muskets!"

Rodley stepped nearer the window and glanced out.

"Twilight is gathering," he added. "I'll get ready at once. I'll look to my pistols. Of course, I shall try to avoid fighting, but the outcome is a problem. Only one thing is certain—I'll have their guns or die trying!"

CHAPTER XIV.

A DANGEROUS MISSION.

Rodley walked deliberately down the stairs to the room below, leaving John Dick alone. That individual nodded commendingly and really felt a brief thrill of admiration for the keeper. He could appreciate courage, and he knew that much courage was required for the contemplated theft of the Mexicans' guns. The feeling soon passed and a smile of amusement appeared on his face.

"All very well," he muttered, "but, really, I don't care a rap who wins the game. Not so long as the lighthouse is safe—or, rather, a certain part of it. Ha—matters grow warm and menacing! No chance like present time. Here I am alone, and the future looms ugly to the vision. I wonder——"

His hand went to his pocket. It came out holding a small sheet of paper. This he unfolded. It was a worn sheet, and clearly of age, but it was an old story to him. He gazed at various lines and figures that were upon it, the ink showing slightly yellow.

"Seventh panel from the east window!" he murmured. "Five feet south from center stone, and four feet from floor. All clear. I know just where to look, and with things so ragged outside I must act promptly. I have time to look now for the bag in the wall——"

He had advanced as he spoke. He stood exactly where Rodley had once stood when he surveyed the cavity left by the falling of the panel in the wall. His hand was on that panel when he suddenly stopped.

"Reckless!" he added. "I may be caught at it. Ho—I have the idea! So the keeper will go ashore, will he? Good! That will leave me here with Bayou. Nothing could be better! I'll knock the darky over the head, pitch him into the bay, secure old Reuel Barzak's gold, and then skip out before Rodley is back from his trip. Ah! that blessed gold that we pirates toiled so long to accumulate! And to think how long I have waited for it."

He carried a hand to his forehead where the peculiar scar showed red-brown.

"Men wondered how I lived so long as a galley-slave. They didn't know of the hope I had to sustain my courage. I did live, and now I am here. Go ashore, my good keeper! When you come back Bayou will be food for the fishes, and I will have the treasure that is buried somewhere in this lighthouse!"

Ten minutes later Rodley returned to the room. He found John Dick leaning out of the window and gazing meditatively seaward.

"Anything new?" asked the keeper.

"Not a blessed thing."

"I want a serious word with you. A keeper is supposed never to leave the light at night. In falling back upon you and the negro to guard the place—can I rely upon you?"

Rodley's voice was earnest and his manner sober to an extreme. He looked sharply at John Dick, and that person met his regard unwaveringly.

"You can rely upon me!" stoutly responded the castaway.

"To the death?"

John Dick felt inclined to laugh at what he fancied was, for him, a double meaning in the words, but he remained serious.

"To the death!" he repeated.

"Do you swear to protect the lighthouse to the best of your ability?" demanded Rodley.

"Shipmate, I swear!" said John Dick promptly.

"Your hand!"

Their palms crossed and the keeper felt a degree of relief, but under all was misgiving that worried him. The castaway was clearly a bold, daring man who would shrink from no danger. So far all was well, but he was a stranger to Rodley, and nothing but the great emergency of the time would have led the keeper to trust the light to him. Doubts assailed the guardian of the place, and the question pressed upon him: Was John Dick really trustworthy?

It was much to leave him under such circumstances. Although nearly double the age of Bayou, he was as muscular as the black man, and far more active of body and mind; loyal as Bayou was, he would be subordinate to John Dick in both ways. So Rodley reasoned, and it was not agreeable to have the lighthouse menaced even by doubts.

The keeper's fears were not abiding worry, for he had much to think about. His part in the events of the night was not to be treated like boyish game.

Presently he went aloft and lighted all the lanterns. Once more, as in many years past, the red light streamed out and the warning was there that ships passing off the bay must keep away from the deadly reefs. Rodley had done his duty, and, thus far, all was well with the beaconhouse.

He had barely finished when oars sounded and Bayou crept into the circle of light. The boat was hoisted with unusual despatch, and the negro came up smiling and content.

"All right, sah!" he exclaimed cheerily.

"You saw the fishermen, did you?"

"Yes, mas'r. I see Hugh Brown, Asa Fielder an' Luke Green—all who live near. I told 'em to hide their boats, an', love ye, how they went scurryin'!"

"Any sign of Marcos and his men?"

"Not yet. They must walk around Gash Head before they get to the decent region where the fishermen live, an' it's quite a jaunt. No, they hadn't passed Gash Head."

"So far, good. I hope the shore-men will hide their boats well."

"Miss Joanna said the Mexicans would come this way on a raft."

"Maybe, Bayou."

"They could, if they built it, sah."

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"Do you think they could do it, Bayou?"

"Why, yes, sah. Why not? You see, all they need is somethin' to paddle along with, an' a raft will answer their needs——"

Bayou was impressed with the belief that Rodley was very phlegmatic, and that his warning had not sunk as deeply as it should. Troubled by this fact he kept on talking and argued freely, but still the head-keeper remained abstracted and the negro gave it up.

Five minutes later Bayou had a surprise. He learned of his master's intention to go ashore and attempt to secure the muskets, and the news was overpowering.

"You'll be killed!" he cried.

"I'll try not to be."

"They will shoot you, if they see you."

"I don't intend they shall see me."

"But they can't help it, you are so big, sah!"

"Oh! cheer up, my bold laddy!" cried John Dick. "Think what a pile of fun you and I will have here. Ha! we will show this lighthouse owner that he is not the only man to do delicate duty. We will prove our caliber. We will give him a fine surprise when he comes back!"

The speaker slapped Bayou on the back and looked the sympathetic ally, but neither of his companions suspected the mocking devil that lay back of the last words. Nor did Bayou suspect that, as far as John Dick could will it, that night was the black man's last span of life.

Rodley prepared to go. Once more the boat was lowered, and, at the keeper's desire, John Dick—who claimed that his back was much better—took the oars. The adventurer was rowed half-way to land, but Rodley would not trust the craft near the shore. Ready to part with his companion, he addressed him earnestly.

"Remember the light!" he urged.

"You shall see that I'll remember!" responded the castaway.

"I give you a sacred trust."

"I won't fail. I will make it," added Dick, with covert meaning, "a truly personal matter."

"Enough! I trust you!"

With this Rodley lowered himself into the water and began swimming for land, while John Dick turned back. When the keeper reached the shore and glanced back, the boat was not visible, but the light of the lanterns burned brightly in the tower.

"All will be well!" murmured the keeper. "Bayou is loyalty itself, and this other man—this John Dick—well, I wish now I had asked Hugh Brown to stay there, but it is too late. All will be well—I hope!"

CHAPTER XV.

A PERPLEXING SITUATION.

Rodley turned away from the bay and tried to think no more about the lighthouse; he was off on his venture, and it was something that called for all his energy, care and concentration. The first step must, of necessity, be to locate the Mexicans. It was to be expected that, having swam to land, they stood and watched until their vessel and her American rival disappeared up the coast. After that they would have a rather long and wholly difficult walk over or around the point called Gash Head, but; before this they must have reached the inhabited part of the shore.

But where were they?

The adventurer surveyed the land before him. Two lights showed, and he knew them to be from the houses of Hugh Brown and Luke Green. There was reason to believe that the third fisherman, Asa Fielder, had taken to flight rather than meet the dreaded fighting men from the warship.

Rodley walked eastward along the land's edge, looking and listening, but nothing came of it. Then he had an idea. Lieutenant Marcos and his followers were ashore, supperless, and without anything to cook. Plainly, they would seek one of the houses within reach and demand the food they required.

Hugh Brown's dwelling was the nearer of the two, and toward this the light-keeper directed his steps. This brought his face toward the remoter hills where the mysterious skulkers had their hidden resort, and he remembered the cannon they had stolen from the wreck.

"If only I could do a double act tonight," he thought, "and destroy the big gun!"

It was a fascinating project, but he did not long dwell upon it. Clearly, he had work enough to deal with Marcos and his men.

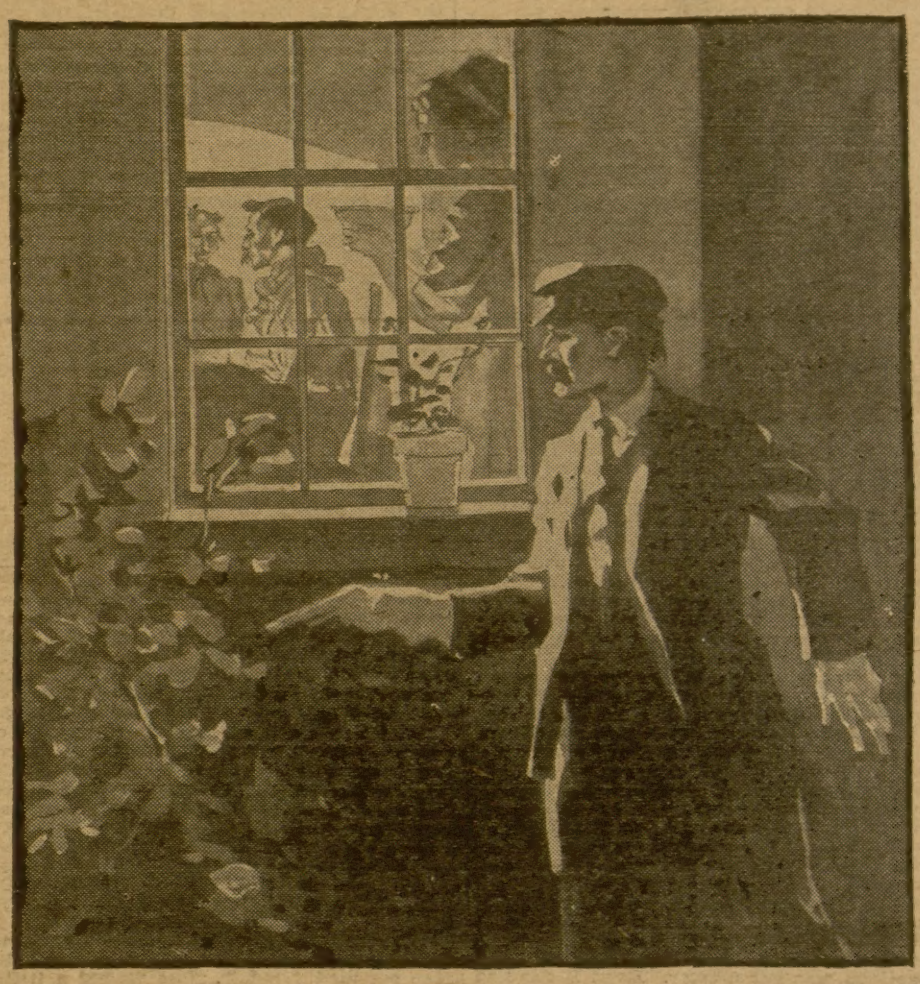
As he neared Brown's house, he had evidence that he had struck the trail at the beginning. The building did not have that quiet that a small family would be likely to indulge in after hours of labor. Light showed in both of the lower rooms, and when he drew closer he saw even more.

"Men are there!" he muttered. "I've hived my bees!"

A few minutes later proof was absolute. Marcos and his fellow sailors were there, sitting at their ease while Joanna and Hugh hurried about to prepare supper.

Nobody was to be seen outside, so Rodley went boldly to the very wall of the house. The light was the feeble glow from a single oil lamp, and he took less risk than if there had been more illumination. As the men were talking, and seemed to be wrapped up in that discussion, the spy peered into the window.

Almost the first thing he saw was the coveted muskets standing in one corner, and leaning against the wall.



"Men are there," he muttered. "I've hived my bees!"

Rodley experienced a thrill of great eagerness. If only he could lay hold of those weapons! Unwatched, they invited him, called to him with a voice which, though still, was none the less alluring. For a moment he contemplated a bold dash through the door, an attempt to lay hold of all four guns at once, a flight to the bay, and then a hurling of the whole lot into the sea!

Prudence prevailed. The attempt would be madness. The room was small; before he could enter and get away, the party would be upon him like panthers. The thing was not to be thought of. He must wait and watch for a chance more favorable.

He regarded the Mexicans as his national and personal enemies, but was forced to mentally admit that their manner was far from bad. Each man was perched upon his chair, or box, or whatever his seat happened to be, and he sat quietly and respectfully. There was none of the lawless style that enlisted men usually exhibit toward cottagers in time of war. As for Marcos, who had been so domineering and surly when at the lighthouse, he was smiling pleasantly and his whole demeanor was affable. Silence had reigned within, but Marcos suddenly stopped Hugh Brown as he passed with a dish.

"Do Texans often come here?" he inquired.

"Practically never, sir," returned Hugh. "This is too desolate a bit of coast."

"Have they sought to swear you to allegiance?"

"It has never been mentioned."

"I assume," added Marcos, "that you are Mexican born."

"And not ashamed to vow my nationality!" exclaimed Hugh.

Rodley smiled. He knew Hugh was an American by birth and loyal to his fatherland, but the evasion was not detected by the lieutenant. The fisherman had settled in Texas before that people sought to throw off the Mexican yoke. Now, long exposure to warm suns had made him as dark as many Mexicans.

"I was studying," pursued the officer, "on the possibility that I and my men might be attacked by Texans."

"I think there is no probability of that, sir."

"Of course, we would beat them off easily, unless they numbered three times our number. Still, we have been upset by our late ill luck."

"Your vessel will come back for you, won't she?"

"When she can. Our captain will not desert us—"Marcos hesitated, and then added—"unless she fares ill at the hands of the Yankee warship. That craft was larger than ours, and mounted far more guns. Excelling in armament and tonnage, she may give our shipmates a hard time of it, but when both vessels disappeared up the coast, ours was footing it merrily. I think she will escape."

"Do you expect her back tonight?"

"Hardly!" admitted Marcos, with a frown. "The Yankee will hang on her track if he can. It may be a week before we see the Don Ramon."

"Bad luck for you."

"Doubly bad! We hoped to do our work at the lighthouse, and that has been a setback."

"I understood you to say that you were going to take possession of the light."

"We were, and are. To be frank, several Yankee merchant vessels are expected to pass off this coast tonight. Our captain decided that the light at Black Reef must not burn while they were in the offing. Without it, they would be at a loss for their bearings, and might venture too far inshore—for that was always the tendency when there was no light. Befogged by the situation, it would have made them uncertain as to their position, and, more important yet, have distracted their attention so that the Don Ramon could run in among them, fire a few shots and bag the whole convoy before they knew we were near. That is why we wanted the lights out tonight. The confounded Yankee warship spoiled our plan."

"Since the plan has miscarried, sir, you will not want the light put out now, I suppose?"

"No and yes. No use to extinguish it when there is no need, but you know our gunboat may have shaken off the Yankee cruiser and be around here again to nab the merchantmen; so you see we must adhere to our design. The lights must go out. More important yet, my men must replace the present force as light-keepers. Do you know the fellows who are now there?"

"I have seen them occasionally, as they get supplies in this section."

"That head-keeper is a stubborn fool!"

"He had been very annoying to you."

"I'll pay him off!" snapped Marcos, forgetting to be polite. "That scoundrel is a dead man!"

"Dead!" echoed Hugh.

"Not yet, but he will be. How dares he defy the power of Mexico, as represented by me? Fool, silly fool! The keeper shall die!"

"I can see how you feel."

"He made an argument about it being a private light. Private rubbish! This is a time of war, and the so-called rights of citizens must yield to military necessity. My men will be put into the lighthouse, and that idiot of a keeper—well, he dies!"

"He may yield when you next urge him," suggested Hugh.

"Too late! His insolence must be punished. He dies!"

The lieutenant had allowed his passions to run away with him, and, forgetting his role of polite good will, he ground out his threats with venom. He looked ominous enough, but Rodley, hovering near the window, smiled faintly. Great as the odds were in favor of the Mexicans, the undaunted light-keeper retained his courage.

Just then Joanna, still busy with the supper, chanced to pass. The officer's brow cleared suddenly and he spoke in his softest tone.

"Senorita," he exclaimed, "I am deeply pained that we should put you to all this trouble. You are kind, very kind to do for us. Believe me, the hearts of all are touched. We are your slaves!"

The girl made a suitable reply, but she neither smiled upon the previous speaker nor seemed complimented by his attentions. She would labor for the men because she must, and she was prudent enough to be cautious, but she had no friendship for the strangers.

Rodley drew away from the window. He was glad he had heard this talk, for the position of the Mexicans in relation to the lighthouse was now clear. They intended to use it to their advantage, and to the damage of the American gunboats and merchantmen that sailed along the coast.

But Rodley did not intend that they should. Now he glanced seaward. There, just over Black Reef, a broad circle of light shone in the blackness of night.

"All is well!" he murmured. "I can trust Bayou and John Dick!"

Turning back he gave himself over again to his all-absorbing problem, how was he to secure the sailors' muskets?

Once he thought of enlisting either Joanna or her father, but the plan was repugnant to him. He wanted to have the guns disappear while the fisherman and his daughter were under the eyes of their guests; he did not want them suspected by Marcos.

Studying the situation, he could see no way better than to wait until they were eating, and then either make an effort to creep in unseen or to make a bold dash, as circumstances seemed to direct. In either case he would risk getting a pistol-shot that might end his mortal career, but it must be ventured.

He was standing close to the house, and where the shadows fell darkest, when he noticed a stir a few yards distant. Retaining his position statue-like, he looked further and waited. Some dark object was advancing, and presently he made out that it was composed of two men. He could not flee without being discovered, so he stood immovable.

They came on, and the stealth of their movements was impressive. They walked slowly, and evidently were scanning the house keenly. Rodley's brief hope that they were Asa Fielder and Luke Green speedily vanished; they were strangers to him.

They passed within a few feet, and then secretly and cautiously peered into the same window where Rodley had taken his survey. This done, they fell and began a talk fully audible to the keeper.

"The officer is in Mexican uniform," half-whispered one of the pair.

"Yes. We were right about that."

"They must surely intend to raid us."

"What else can it mean? Why else should they be here?"

"I've been expecting this sort of thing."

"It's a small force."

"Stupid, don't you understand there must be more of them near?"

"Be that as it may, they must be kept out of the hills!"

Rodley gave a little start. Now he understood who these last-comers were. They were members of the mysterious band who hid in the hills. The situation was growing complicated.

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"Are you the regular conductor?" asked the joker, affecting an intense interest in the matter.

"Yes, sir," replied the young fellow.

"Then permit me to say that you are the youngest conductor I ever saw. Why, you don't appear to be older than my son, who is 17."

"Perhaps I don't," said the adolescent conductor, in a testy tone, indicating that the thing was beginning to pall upon him. "Fares, please."

"May I ask you just one question?" queried the Cleveland man, when the fares had been paid.

"Yes, but please make it short; I'm busy," retorted the conductor.

"What I would like to know," said the Cleveland man, "is this: Were you born on this trip?"

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A baseball team can't win with a pitcher full of beer.

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One way to remove paint is to sit down on it before it is dry.

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No, Cordelia, cabinet ministers do not deliver sermons in a cabinet.

Some people avoid popular concerts because they are fond of music.

It is easier to stop the barking of a dog than the singing of a mosquito.

A girl can love almost any man that her parents are willing to object to.

Of course, the preacher's aim wasn't accurate when his sermon hit you.

The dog owned by your neighbor is nearly always a howling success.

Women are less dangerous than men; they usually talk before they act.

If a man knows enough not to go to law he is wiser than the average lawyer.

When the parlor gas is turned low, it's a safe bet the right young man is in it.

The ant can draw twenty times its own weight—and so can a mustard plaster.

When we hear a woman say that all men are alike we wonder how she found it out.

If a man has money to burn he can easily find a woman willing to furnish a match.

A man would rather lose $25 at the race-track than give it to his wife to buy a bonnet.

Fortunate is the woman who remembers that frowns beget more wrinkles than smiles.

A man never realizes his wife's superiority until he attempts to put a crying baby to sleep.

No language can describe the feelings of a deaf-mute when he steps on a tack in the dark.

When a man gives more than a dollar to charity he usually manages to get caught in the act.

It is difficult to get a crooked man interested in the scenery along the straight and narrow path.

A scientist claims that 10,000 microbes can roost comfortably on the point of a pin. That's more than one man can do.

When a man takes his wife to the theater he thinks it's up to him to go out between the acts and telephone home to see if the house is still there.

After eating onions a girl should immediately sit down and peruse some work of fiction that is calculated to take her breath away.

The Riddle of the Cliffs;

Or, THE GHOSTLY WOMAN IN GRAY.

By Helen Tompkins.

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Begun in No. 11, March 13. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, or our agents, or by mail from office of publication.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE WILL.

THE window was wide open and the tiny apron with its ruffled strings and knots of blue, swayed to and fro or fluttered oddly in the current of air that came in wet and salt from the sea. Jessie groaned a little and closed her eyes again. She was deathly sick and her hair and frock were sopping wet. Her collar was open and the faint scent of some penetrating drug still clung to her braids. It was too much trouble, after all, to think, and she closed her eyes again, then suddenly sprung to her feet with a cry of terror.

The sun had gone down, although the window was still blushing with the passing of his presence. Jessie could tell that, although the curtains were still drawn. A chair was overturned and the little apron, now that she noticed it more closely, was hanging loosely by one string from the peg. The pocket was turned inside out. From the floor, a single sunset ray flashed back from the shattered pink petal of a lotus-blossom crushed to powder now beneath some careless foot. And just then there came to her anxious ears the first note from the bell in the study.

But Jessie, young and uneducated as she was, belonged to the stuff of which martyrs are made. She only set her teeth together tightly and pondered a little, although even this slight concentration of her mind made her sick and giddy and brought the old maddening pain back to her aching head. In spite of it, however, she moved about swiftly and noiselessly. Again the bell sent forth an impatient, jangling summons. They would grow tired of waiting and come for her after a little. And when they did come they must not find her here a traitor to her trust.

She was moving about the room now feverishly enough. Right or wrong, Morris Hastings was her master. Even if she had not feared to meet him it broke her heart to think of seeing the hope in his eager face change to the old sickness of despair. She must try what a woman's wit could do.

The door was still just as she had noticed it just before falling into that strange fit of drug-induced unconsciousness. The single window looked down upon the shadowed, tossing sea so far below. Impossible as she had thought it, there must be some hidden, secret entrance to her chamber, for neither by door nor window had the mysterious robber entered. And the entrance must be near the window and the chair where she had been sitting when the odor of ether first came to her nostrils. In no other way could she account for the readiness with which she had yielded to its influence. With a new intelligence in her face, she looked closely at the wall near which she had been sitting. And then a smothered cry escaped her lips, just as a third jangling peal came from the bell in the study.

The wall was of stone and roughly plastered. There seemed nothing to conceal but in the hurry of the moment Jessie found that the mysterious conspirator had left a clew behind her. On a nail or hook driven in the plaster was a frayed scrap of gray gauze, faint and indefinite as the torn web of a spider. It taught Jessie the way the woman in gray had gone before her. Oh, for more time!

A fourth angry peal, louder and more distinct, came from the study. Instinctively Jessie knew that it would not be repeated and that whatever she did must be done quickly. The key was still in the lock of the door. Catching a loose iron bar from the grate she slipped the smaller end of it in the handle of the key, and using the iron bar as a lever bent it downward with all her might. The key snapped in the bolt and the broken end jangled to the floor. The girl laid aside the bar with a sob of relief. The opening of the door would be a matter of time now. The sounds of footsteps were loud on the stair. Mingled with them she heard the noise of excited voices. Above it all she could hear Morris Hastings' quick tones, and then his summons to her—his impatient demand that the door be opened.

She did not answer. She was moving her hands hurriedly over the blank, gray wall eagerly in a frantic attempt to find the hidden spring that she felt so sure must be there. She was still sobbing inarticulately under her breath. She heard Hastings throw himself against the door and then the crash of splintered wood. The doors were not so strong as those downstairs. A moment more——

Ah, a hidden spring which she might have sought for vainly a long, long time, yielded beneath her frantic fingers and a section of the wall swung outward. Without waiting to think, she stepped inside the opening. Her foot must have touched another spring in doing so, for the door swung shut behind her just as the outer door, yielding to the pressure against it, splintered and the whole household trooped across the threshold.

Jessie did not look about her at first to see to what sort of place she had come. She fancied that the secret door must be quite thin, for she could hear the voices and even the movements of those without. She heard her aunt's frightened sobbing and Anna Blake's coarser masculine voice. Morris Hastings did not speak at first, but the breaking-in of the door had evidently told upon him. She could hear his stifled breathing as he stood at the window, almost within reach of her hand, had there been no wall between them.

The wind had risen with the clouding of the sky and the going down of the sun. The opening door had created a draught. Jessie had thoughtlessly laid her apron down upon the window-ledge, after a somewhat cursory examination of it, and as the door was broken in, a rising gust sent the bit of white fabric like a broken-winged bird, drifting down toward the hungry waves. It caught on a projecting bit of rock and clung there in full view of those who leaned from the window above.

"There are marks of a struggle," said Louise Hastings, in a dreadful voice, pointing to the iron bar—the crushed lotus-petal and the overturned chair. "Morris, I tell you there has been foul play even here!"

He did not answer her. He was leaning far out of the window and his young, keen eyes had caught sight of that fluttering bit of white caught on the tooth of a jagged rock, and a little further away a bit of color that rose and fell with the foam of the waves.

"Morris, why don't you speak?"

He beckoned to her to follow his downward glance. The old housekeeper, with the familiarity of long usage, leaned over his shoulder. When she, too, caught sight of the fluttering bit of white, she promptly went into violent hysterics, and for a time pandemonium reigned supreme.

Jessie took advantage of the noise and confusion to look about her. It was not quite dark in the room, although she could not tell at first from whence the light came. She was standing in a very tiny, stone-flagged apartment. Beneath her feet a flight of steps led downward into the darkness. On an out-cropping fragment of stone at her elbow was a bit of candle, and near it a paper funnel, scented faintly with ether, and another fragment of gray gauze.

Jessie had been so interested in looking about her that she had quite forgotten those on the outside, so that she had lost the thread of conversation. She aroused herself now to find the room strangely quiet. Only a light footfall and a stifled movement now and then told her that it was quite deserted. She fancied that Anna Blake must have been left in charge, for the step sounded familiar. She waited a little, and then, bracing herself and tucking her skirts closer about her, she stepped downward in the darkness.

She went very slowly, feeling her way carefully before taking every step, for she never knew when a single incautious movement might hurl her headlong into some hidden gulf. She fancied that she could hear the sound of the waves far beneath her and a damp, musty smell clung to the walls that she touched as she went downward. Occasionally the steps twisted in a different direction so that after a little she grew bewildered and could form no idea of the direction in which she was going, and once or twice she passed little niches or cells from which came faint gleams of light. She fancied that the lights glowed from some of the occupied rooms in the lower part of the building, and once she thought that she caught the sound of excited voices. But they died away and she could not feel sure, after all, that her imagination had not deceived her.

At last she came to a low, iron grating that evidently communicated directly with the open air. Here a stone bench was placed—a few fragments of broken victuals—and an untouched bottle of wine. The walls here were crusted thickly with slimy moss, for at high tide the foam of the waves found entrance through the grating, and it was dark with seaweed. She judged that it must be quite dark outside by this time, although the room in which she stood was still faintly illumined. She could not tell still from whence the light came. She sat down helplessly on the bench, and shivering a little with a sudden chill, wondered what she was to do next.

She was tired, faint and exhausted, and for the first time the shattered lotus-cup—the missing scrap of paper—and Morris Hastings' handsome face, seemed vague and hardly worth the time and trouble which she had spent upon them. A book lay upon the bench beside her. She opened it, fluttering the leaves idly between her fingers. And just then she gave a cry, and for a moment the whole world turned dark and swam before her. Between the pages of the book was a scrap of paper splotched and dirty and stained with blood.

She forgot for a moment the disappointments of the past and the perils of the present as she secured the bit of paper safely in the bosom of her frock, and then with a deadly sickness at her heart—a sickness that for the moment seemed to paralyze her—she heard a footstep coming down the stairs which she had just so bravely, if uncertainly, descended.

She looked about her frenziedly like a wild animal in search of a way of escape. At first she saw no hope. If the person who followed her down that wandering flight of stairs had any reason to suspect her presence somewhere in that secret hiding-place, she had as well make a virtue

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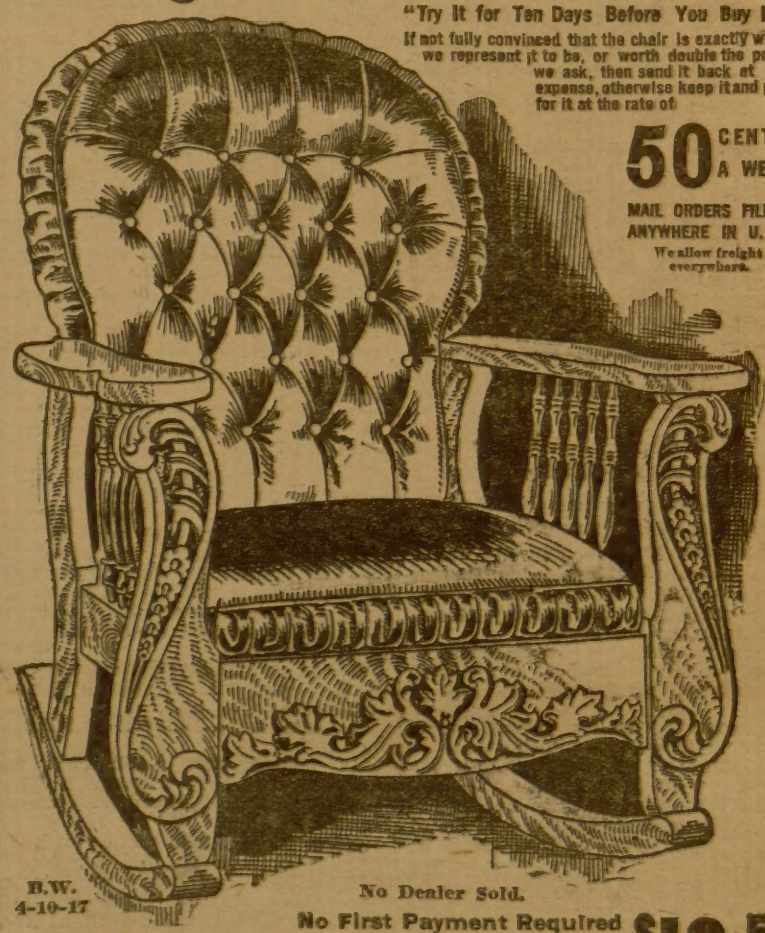

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of necessity and surrender herself at once. If not—

She huddled herself in as small a space as possible behind the stone bench and waited with her heart-throbs almost choking her, and her breath coming thick and fast. The next moment the woman in gray stood before her. In the dim light her face looked very old and careworn, but nothing could mar the perfect features—the poise of the proud head—the slender grace of the whole figure. She paid but little heed to her surroundings. She stood for a moment near the end of the bench and waited, but hearing nothing, pressed forward a little, a swinging door fell back a trifle, and the next moment she was gone.

The secret door, as it admitted her, allowed Jessie a momentary glimpse of the room into which she had vanished. It was the study. The young girl caught sight of the Chinese god smiling vacantly at his empty hands, and then the door closed again.

Would she come back? Would it be quite safe to follow her? It did not escape the young girl's mind that to further her own ends she must keep hidden both from the household and the woman in gray, while her mysterious antagonist had the household only to avoid. Jessie had regained possession of the paper, but with all her heart now she longed to solve for her master the mystery of the woman who haunted the Cliffs.

There was no room in the whole house with which Jessie was so familiar as with the study. It had long been her especial charge, and it came to her now with a sudden throb of the heart that if the woman before her had only quitted the study, she knew of a place in the room where she might remain for an indefinite time undetected. In one corner of the room in the old days there had been a niche in which the former master of the Cliffs had kept a suit of armor. After it had been taken away by Carroll Hastings, who hated any reminder of the former tenants, he had merely nailed some boards over the niche and a bit of tapestry served to hide the whole from view.

But the work had been hurriedly, unskillfully done, and one day Jessie found that the bit of amateurish carpenter-work was an utter failure, when one of the boards swung outward, only hindered by the nails in the upper part from falling to the ground. A casual observation, after she had pressed it back in place, had shown her that the nails which had been used in the lower part of the boards had been too short. She had replaced the curtains after that and said nothing about it. It served as a place to keep the duster and broom and she used it for that occasionally when she did not care to climb the stairs in order to put the things away in their proper places. This hiding-place would serve her purpose now excellently enough, could she only gain it unobserved.

With her heart beating so that it almost choked her, she pressed the spring as the woman in gray before her had done, and the next instant she stood in the study. The room was quite empty. A bright fire glowed in the grate and the room was glowing with many lights. A plate filled with cakes and fruit was upon the table. The sight of it reminded Jessie that she had not tasted food all that long day and that her lips were parched with thirst. She snatched a little of the fruit and one of the cakes from the table as she passed it, while the Chinese god gazed on the theft unmoved. The next moment the curtain of tapestry dropped behind her.

A clock somewhere struck nine. The girl was growing tired, for she was obliged to stand erect in her hiding-place, and the old pain in her head was growing worse. The night was quite still. From outside after a time, however, she fancied that she caught the sound of wheels. A little later Morris Hastings hastily entered the room.

He was looking pale and ill. Jessie drew the tapestry aside and looked at him anxiously. Perhaps her tender heart would have gained the ascendancy over her judgment had it pleaded with her long. As it was, a servant entered the room almost immediately.

"A gentleman to see you, Mr. Hastings," he announced a little nervously.

Morris turned with a start. "Did he give his name?" he asked. His voice was uncertain, but there was a hard, defiant look on his handsome face.

"No, sir. He said that he was a stranger and that his name would mean little or nothing to you. His business was important, he added, and he would not detain you long."

Morris Hastings was growing suspicious even of the servants. He looked at the fellow sharply, but the scrutiny was unsatisfactory and told him nothing. "You may show the gentleman in," he said at last.

The gentleman came in almost at once. He was an utter stranger to Morris—a clean, smooth-shaven, dark-faced man with a legal air, Morris thought.

"I beg your pardon," he said, advancing a little so that the light fell full upon his strong face. "I belong to the legal profession, Mr. Hastings, and my name is Hartsfield. I had some slight acquaintance with your father and am here now to represent the interests of your cousin, Olive Hastings."

Morris fell back a little and the old look that Jessie had grown familiar with earlier in the day, swept momentarily over his face. She gazed at him from her hiding-place a little fearfully.

"I have no idea what business you can possibly have with me," he said icily as he offered the other a chair, "or what possible interests my cousin can have in which I am even remotely concerned. My father left some slight bequests to her, I believe, and I took care that his directions in the matter were carried out promptly. Should you care to see the original of the will—I have already sent her a copy—you can do so at your leisure. I have notified my lawyer to aid her in any way possible."

The face before him did not change nor did the lawyer speak as he seated himself calmly. Morris laughed a little impatiently. "Do you doubt the genuineness of the will?" he asked sneeringly.

There was so much studied insolence in the voice that the lawyer's face colored darkly and a swift look, like the flash of a polished sword, shot from his dark eyes.

Anger forced him to show his hand. "I do not doubt for a moment the genuineness of your father's will," he said quickly. "I do doubt his legal right to dispose of property that never belonged to him except by right of unlawful possession."

Morris Hastings' brow clouded and his hands were clenched a little. "You may or may not be the man whom you claim to be," he said briefly. "If you are not an imposter the natural thing for an honorable man to have done would have been to have shown whatever proofs he may have had to support such an absurd claim to my legal representative. If your object is blackmail——"

The color ebbed from Hartsfield's face and he laughed shortly. "We are both men of the world, Mr. Hastings," he said sharply, "yet we are both acting, it seems to me, with extreme childishness. To be perfectly frank with you, the role which I am playing tonight is one greatly at variance with my own ideas of what is right and proper. I yielded reluctantly in this matter to your cousin, who is a most unreasonable, as well as a most charming young woman."

The sound of his own voice seemed at least partially to tend to restore his good humor. He leaned back in his chair and smiled.

"Mr. Hartsfield," said the young man, "I am not at best a very patient man, and matters of which, of course, you can have no knowledge have tried me today very sorely. If you have any business with me—if there is anything which you can urge in extenuation of this most unjustifiable intrusion—I warn you now that you had better proceed with it at once."

A new look of something almost like regret swept over the lawyer's face. "I agree with you as to the advisability of getting through with our business as soon as possible," he said mildly. "The night is dark and cold and my drive back to the station promises to be a most unpleasant one. As I have already told you, I believe, I represent Miss Olive Hastings, who, as the only living issue of Oliver Hastings, lays claim to the Cliffs, and to all other property of which your father ostensibly died possessed."

Morris Hastings' white face had grown whiter still. He clenched his hands and moistened his dry lips with a tongue that was almost as dry. There was a queer, clucking sound in his throat when he tried to speak.

"On what grounds do you make such a preposterous claim?" he asked slowly.

"We base our claim upon a will drawn up and signed by your grandfather, of which both you and your father had guilty knowledge," said the lawyer coolly.

"And that will——"

"Is at present in my own possession," said Hartsfield quickly. He took a paper from his pocket and held it up with a sneering smile.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE TURN OF THE WHEEL.

Morris Hastings, preposterous as the assertion may seem, recognized the paper at once as the will which both he and Louise had examined together. Although he had, he fancied, burned it with his own hands, it did not need the bit of gray gauze which was wrapped about it instead of the traditional red-tape, to convince him that by some unfortunate contingency it had been preserved to spell ruin to his sister and ruin and dishonor to himself. He only looked helplessly at the lawyer and did not speak.

"Listen to me, Mr. Hastings," said the lawyer more gently. "Things after all may not be so bad as you think. Your cousin is a very generous as well as a most clever woman. It is she who has played the spy in your father's house since long before your father's death. She visited the Cliffs once as a child, and the secret stairways and entrances were perfectly familiar to her. This familiarity, aided by a wig of fair hair and an indomitable will, has aided her in accomplishing her purpose. I do not need to tell you how or why she knew of the existence of the will made in her father's favor. I suppose her belief in its existence was first due to her mother's suspicions. After Mrs. Hastings' death, however, her daughter learned the truth—from some one whom your father fancied died years ago—and who, when he really came to die, could not leave the world with the guilty secret on his conscience.

"Her mother told her something else as well. The true story of the missing paper concerning the White City of Silence. No—you need not start. Mrs. Hastings herself had never seen the paper. She had a shrewd idea, however, that it was within the walls of the Cliffs, and she filled her daughter's mind with the same suspicion. Do not ask why—I have no idea why. Your cousin has a tenderness for you, Mr. Hastings, and I fancy that her first thought was that if she could find the paper for which your father had searched so vainly and so long, the possession of it would indemnify you for the loss of your father's fortune. However, her mother, on her deathbed, destroyed this delusion once for all. 'Let Morris Hastings or his father find the paper when and how they will, Olive,' she said. 'It will bring neither of them anything but a disappointment that will break their hearts. No matter how I know it. I swear to you that I never saw the paper and that I never expect to see it!'

"Miss Hastings thought at first that her mother's mind was wandering. 'Do you mean that there is no such place as the White City of Silence?' she asked her.

"'No, Olive, that is not what I mean. I have seen your uncle eat his heart out over this mystery that was no mystery to me, but he is a wicked, wicked man and I do not care—for him. But his wife was a good woman and I should not like for her children—her son—to suffer as he has suffered. So you must search for the paper yourself when I am gone. You will find it at the Cliffs, though I must not tell you how I know it. There was an original White City of Silence in your great-uncle's time—there is a White City of Silence now. It was your most-wretched uncle's visit to it that made him the man he was, and at last cost him his reason and his life. No, I will say only this: Say to my nephew, if the paper cannot be found when his father and I are both gone, that I beg him for the love of God and the sake of his dead moth-

(Continued on page fifteen.)

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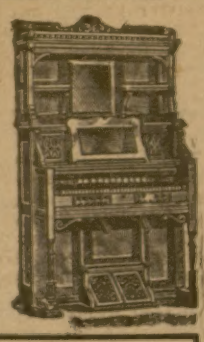

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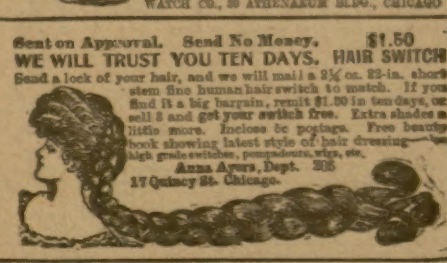

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Let that digestive defect be corrected and the formerly fat person goes back to his or her original shape. You can prove this on yourself. Seventy-five cents will secure from your druggist one of the large cases of Marmola Prescription Tablets recently licensed for sale by the Marmola Company, Box 174, Detroit, Mich. Take one of these tablets after each meal and at bedtime and the demonstration starts right there. Very soon you will experience a new sense of digestive comfort and a delightful feeling of increased energy which should be followed in due season by a gradual, uniform decrease of your fat.

During the demonstration period you eat and drink as formerly, remember. The tablets need no help from either dieting or exercising, nevertheless the daily loss should approximate ten to sixteen ounces a day.

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In the express train from Paris to Nice two travelers began to talk.

"You are going to Nice?"

"Yes."

"Also to Monte Carlo?"

"Oh, yes. I go there every year."

"You always play there a little, doubtless?"

"Certainly—once every morning and every evening—quite regularly, two sittings in the day."

"And you lose sometimes?"

"Never."

"How is that possible? May one take the liberty to ask how you manage that?"

"It is quite simple; I play the violin and nothing else."

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Edna—It's a good thing for me that silence gives consent.

Amelia—Why?

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"Shake before taking," read the fever and ague victim from the label on the bottle of medicine.

"Talk about your sarcasm," he said to himself, "that is sure the real thing."

JUST A WAY THEY HAVE.

A little nonsense now and then
Is relished by all married men;
But oft a man expects his wife
To stand his nonsense all her life.

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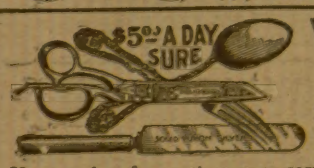

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Not Realistic.

Author (after first performance)— "Well, what do you think of it, old man?

Criticus—Oh, I like it well enough—with the exception of the villain's part.

Author — What's wrong with it?

Critics—It is shy of realism. Why, he doesn't smoke a single cigarette.

For the Poor.

Little Willie—Say, pa, what is a charity ball?

Pa—A charity ball, my son, is a scheme to enable the wealthy to exhibit thousands of dollars' worth of diamonds and gowns in order to raise a few plunks for the poor.

Hasty Correction.

Hojax—I hear you are engaged, old man. Allow me to congratulate you.

Tomdix—You didn't hear it quite right, my boy. I'm married.

Hojax—Oh, I beg pardon. You have my sympathy.

WHAT IT WAS.

Father—Grace, I thought I heard a loud smack in the hall last night.

Grace—Yes, Mr. Smith made that noise with his lips when I told him you had cleared $50,000 in a real estate deal.

Virtue a Necessity.

"There is one thing for which mankind, I think, deserves credit."

"What might that be?"

"When you think of all the liars we have, there has never been one who claimed positively that he had seen the north pole."

After the Honeymoon.

"Ma says she can't understand why I married you."

"Did you tell her?"

"How could I?"

"Didn't she keep still long enough?"

"Yes, but I don't know."

As Defined.

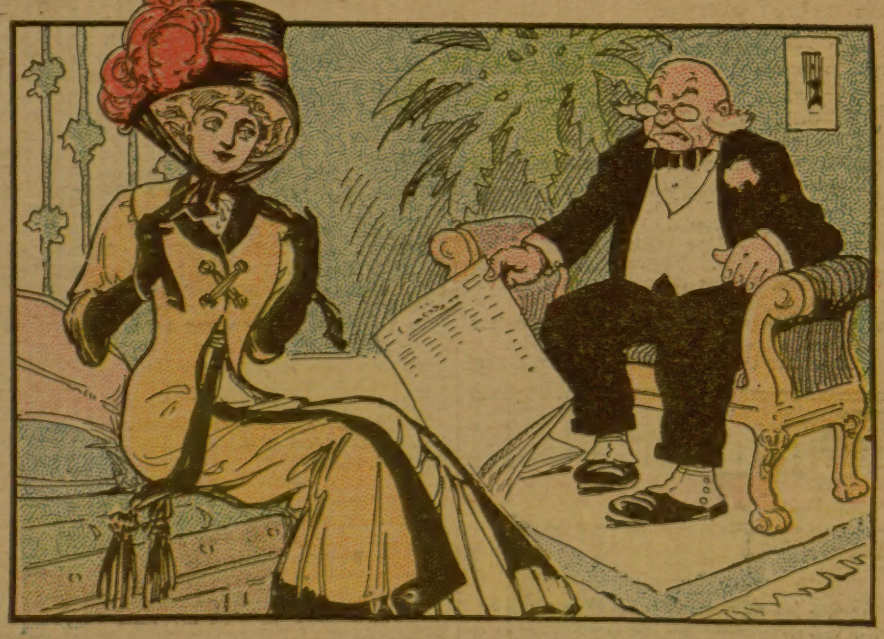
"Father," said the minister's little daughter, "the paper says you 'officiated at the wedding clad in the traditional garb of the clergy.' What does 'traditional' mean?"

"'Traditional,' my dear," answered the good man as he looked at his cheap suit of black with a sigh, "refers to something that has been handed down."

NO IMPROVEMENT.

Customs change, are changing ever,
And styles are changing every day;
But there's one thing changeth never—
Kisses are kisses the same old way.

DIDN'T HURRY.



The Widow—Yesterday, sir, I reached my 30th birthday.

Old Crusty—Indeed? But it must have taken you at least 40 years to do it!

Painful Progress.

"You don't seem to be getting along well," groaned the victim in the chair.

"No," rejoined the dentist. "I have evidently struck a snag."

Candidate for Sympathy.

Newpop—My wife insists on naming our baby after some of my folks.

Knox—Poor chap! What seems to be the matter with him?

Modest Request.

Jack (to his roommate)—Say, Tom, will you do me a favor?

Tom—Anything in reason, old man.

Jack—Then kindly leave your trousers out in the hall tonight.

Tom—The idea! What do you want me to do that for?

Jack—The pattern is so loud it keeps me awake.

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A remarkable offer by one of the leading ear specialists in this country, who will send two months' medicine free to prove his ability to cure Deafness, Head Noises and Catarrh. Address Dr. G. M. Branaman, 1283 Walnut St., Kansas City, Mo.

Logical Trading.

"I see by your sign," said the lady customer, "that you sell cracked eggs at half price."

"Yes, ma'am," answered the grocer. "We always make a 50 per cent reduction on goods that are cracked."

"Thank you," rejoined the lady customer. "You may send me a dollar's worth of cracked wheat—and here's your 50 cents."

Presents to Our Readers.

In this issue on page 3 will be found an offer of 7-piece bed set free and also a fine parlor lamp. This wonderful offer is made by the Hagood Mfg. Co., 310 N. Commercial St., St. Louis, Mo This firm has been in business a long time and we know that they do exactly as they agree to and that thousands of our readers have received beautiful dinner sets for a little help. This company makes a special offer in connection with their Perfection Baking Powder and every reader should take advantage of this generous opportunity.

A Safe Burglar.

"Is he a safe burglar?"

"I guess he is as safe as any of them."

His Little Scheme.

"Say," remarked the visionary party, "I've got a manufacturing scheme that has all the earmarks of easy money."

"What is it?" queried his one-man audience, eagerly.

"The employment of looking glass in the manufacture of artificial eyes," explained the visionary party.

Dependable Proprietary Medicines.

It must be admitted by every fair-minded, intelligent person, that a medicine could not live and grow in popularity for thirty years, and to-day hold a record for thousands upon thousands of actual cures, as has Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, without possessing great virtue and actual worth. Such medicines must be looked upon and termed both standard and dependable by every thinking person.

Pleaded Guilty.

"In this business," remarked the customer in the drug store, "I suppose you acquire more or less knowledge of therapeutics?"

"Oh, I knew all about 'em afore I came here," replied the new boy. "I had 'em when I was 6 years old and they broke out all over me."

TACKLES

Nerve Indeed.

Mrs. A—The nerve of that poultry man! We bought a turkey from him and he actually pumped it full of wind to make it look larger.

Mrs. Z—Oh, lots of them do that.

Mrs. A—Yes, but this one actually had the audacity to borrow our automobile pump to do it with.

CLEVER DOCTOR

Cured a 20 Years' Trouble Without Any Medicine.

A wise Indiana physician cured a 20 years' stomach disease without any medicine as his patient tells:

"I had stomach trouble for 20 years, tried family medicines, patent medicines and all the simple remedies suggested by my friends, but grew worse all the time.

"Finally a doctor who is the most prominent physician in this part of the state told me medicine would do me no good, only irritate my stomach and make it worse—that I must look to diet and quit drinking coffee.

"I cried out in alarm. 'Quit drinking Coffee!' why, 'What will I drink?'

"'Try Postum,' said the doctor, 'I drink it and you will like it when it is made according to directions, with cream, for it is delicious and has none of the bad effects coffee has.'

"Well that was two years ago and I am still drinking Postum. My stomach is right again and I know Doctor hit the nail on the head when he decided coffee was the cause of all my trouble. I only wish I had quit it years ago and drank Postum in its place."

Never too late to mend. Ten days' trial of Postum in place of coffee works wonders. "There's a Reason."

Look in pkgs. for the famous little book, "The Road to Wellville."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

Had No Kick Coming.

Harker—I say, Parker, you seem to take life pretty easy; you must have a good salary.

Parker—Yes, pretty fair. My salary is $1,200 a year, I save $100 and run into debt $700—that's $2,000 all told, and if a bachelor can't live on that he ought to be ashamed of himself."

Cruelty.

Him—I've come to a conclusion.

Her—What is it?

Him—I realized today that I have been a bachelor for thirty-eight years and—

Her—Oh, Jack, this is so sudden!

Him—And I decided that I'd had a bully time and that I'll keep it up.

Delighted.

"Fools rush in where angels fear to tread," remarked Lightwit, meeting Sharp at a reception the other evening.

"That's right, my boy," rejoined Sharp, extending his hand, "but I'm delighted to see you here, just the same."

Had His Eyes Open.

"The average policeman," remarked the moralizer, "leads an aimless sort of life."

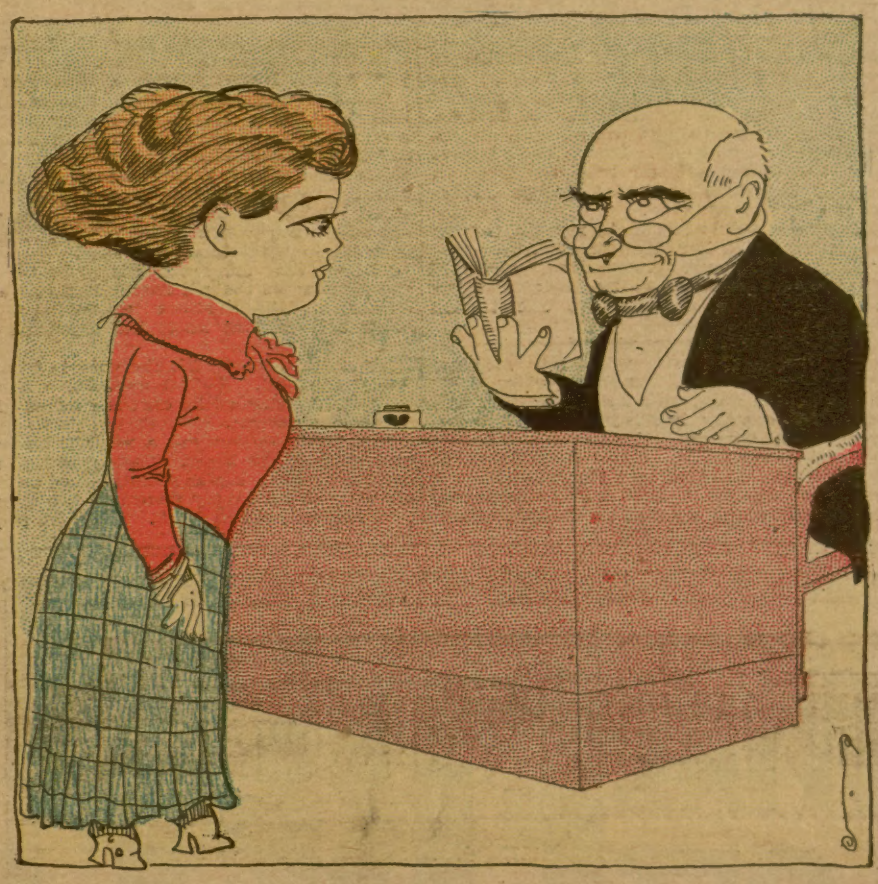
"That's right," rejoined the demoralizer, "but I never fully realized it until I saw one trying to shoot a dog the other day."

No Pass for Him.

Green—There goes the new superintendent of the X. Y. & Z. Railway. Do you know him?

Brown—No; I haven't even a passing acquaintance with him.

SHE WAS FAT.



The Professor—What made the tower of Pisa lean?
The Plump Coed—I wish I knew. I'd like to try it myself.

ONE DIFFERENCE.

'Twixt prize ring and political
The difference is fair—
The one in which men biff and bang
And spar and feint is square.

Scared.

"Can I marry your daughter?"
"Can you support a family?"
"Lord! Have you lost your job?"

Rastus' Soliloquy.

Rastus—I don't believe in dis medicine. Ef I takes it, I knows I'll be wuss, an' ef I don't take it, Liza oll come naggin' at me till she makes me wuss. So, as I'se got toe be wuss anyway, I guess I'll take it.

Related.

One day an earthquake and a case of ague chanced to meet.

"We are related, I believe," said the earthquake.

"We are," replied the case of ague, "although we have never met before."

"Shake!" they both exclaimed simultaneously.

Driven to Drink.

Artist—My next picture will be entitled "Driven to Drink."

His Friend—Ah, some powerful portrayal of baffled passion, I suppose?

Artist—Oh, no; it's a cab approaching a watering trough.

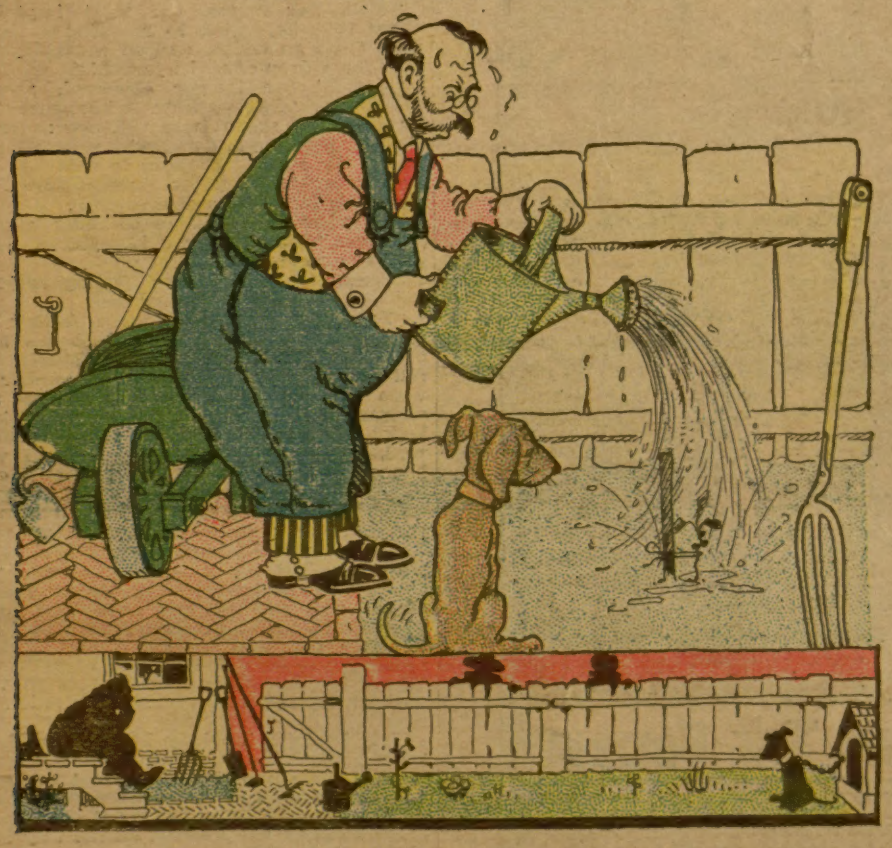
These Social Distinctions.

"Mr. Flim's family doesn't speak to us any more," said Mrs. Flam.

"What's the trouble?"

"Pride of position. Mr. Flim is on the grand jury. My husband is only a petit juror."

THAT GARDENING FEVER.



He knows that he can wield a rake
Just like a hired man,
And feels assured his skin will take
A lovely coat of tan;
And when he goes down to his work
What stories he can hatch
To tell the office boy and clerk
About his garden patch!

Then let him have his little sport
And let him plant his seeds;
We know the harvest will be short
And mostly run to weeds,
And that the outcome's sure to be,
Unless he has good luck,
Ten dollars' worth of energy
For ten cents' worth of truck.

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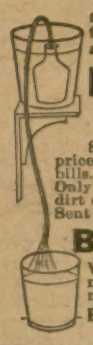
and risk your life and health. Make sure that *your* water supply is *absolutely safe* by sending $1.00 for the



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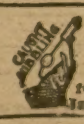

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are coining money—selling from 50 to 500 sets per week. You can do it. Send your address today and let us PROVE IT. Experience unnecessary. We show you how to make $3 to $10 a day. OUTFIT FREE to workers.
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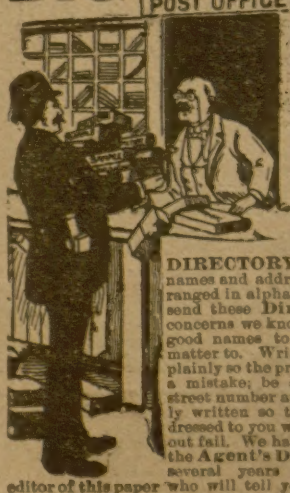

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In the Gallows' Shadow

By ANNIE BROWNLEE

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CHAPTER X.

TWO uneventful weeks have dragged wearily by. The detectives have utterly failed in locating the man who escaped from the bedchamber of the late millionaire. Many believed that the real criminal was found in the person of George Caverhill, who was awaiting trial in a loathsome prison cell.

But Alice's faith in her brother's innocence remained steadfast. The enormous rewards which she offered for the capture of the real criminal, caused even the sleepy, retired detectives to wake up to the importance of the case. Mr. Brown was untiring in his efforts to secure the best counsel for the accused, and by his efforts Mr. Philips, a celebrated criminal lawyer from New York, was induced to come over and take up the case.

Much sympathy was felt for the brave girl, who was fighting so hard for her brother's life. The papers paid delicate little compliments to the courage and determination of the clever little heiress. Then, gradually they began to discourage her efforts by insinuating that if the real criminal was not already in prison, he was hardly likely to be found at this late day. Alice shed many bitter tears over the cruel articles published. But they only strengthened her determination to free her brother's name from the stigma of crime that clouded it.

As Alice sat in her pleasant sitting-room, in Mr. Brown's luxurious home in Boston, she was thinking sadly of that fatal night, four weeks ago, the night that had clouded her life and threatened to end forever the promising young life of her brother. The first two weeks she had expected each day would bring her some word from Gerald Ashton. As the days slowly succeeded each other, and no line was sent her, she was forced to believe that he had no desire to be mixed up in the case. Perhaps he shrank from having the story of that fatal night made public. She shed a few tears, and uttered a few heart-broken sighs, that he should leave her so easily. "He might come back if only for an hour, and tell of our drive that night. It would relieve me from an embarrassing position. I dare not break my oath and tell that, no, not even to save poor George. God help me! and they will insist on my telling them at the trial!"

Her sad musings were interrupted by a maid entering with word that Mr. Brown was waiting to escort her to the prison. The trial was to commence on the morrow, and this was the last time she would be allowed to visit George, till the law had decided whether he was innocent or guilty.

Mr. and Mrs. Brown were very kind and considerate to the lonely girl, but it needed no experienced eye to tell that the suspense and anxiety of the last four weeks were telling fearfully upon her. The kind-hearted people refused themselves to society, and gave their entire attention to the beautiful young heiress and her unfortunate brother. They had grown to love the patient, sweet-voiced girl very dearly. But in their hearts they feared that a bitter trial awaited her, for they had little hope that George Caverhill would be acquitted.

Alice was only allowed to remain a very short time with her brother today.

"Try and bear up, George dear," she said at parting. "Things may look brighter soon," and with a little sob she turned away.

Alice wished to stop at a drug-store on the way home, as she wished to make a few small purchases. As the carriage drew up before the door, and Alice alighted, two men were coming hurriedly toward them, engaged in earnest conversation. Before she could step aside, one of them knocked rudely against her, almost throwing her off her feet. Surprised and a little annoyed, she looked hastily up and uttered a startled exclamation. Mr. Brown was by her side in an instant.

"The man with the queer mouth and the gold in his teeth!" she said hurriedly. "Quick, or they will escape!" pointing to the two fleeing figures disappearing round a corner.

Mr. Brown hastily summoned the police, with several others that had gathered about, and set out in pursuit. But they soon returned without their man, who had little difficulty in escaping.

"By Jupiter! That was a close shave, eh, comrade!" one of the men said to the other, as they gained their room in a dilapidated old house in the most degraded part of the city.

"It was pretty near being an ugly affair," the man with the gold in his teeth answered, rather nervously, and a trifle paler than usual.

"But what in thunder was there about that girl to start you off like that?" the other questioned, in a voice that sounded rather strange and eager.

"I guess I must have mistook her for some one else," he said, sheepishly. "There's a girl about here that I don't care to meet, you know. I was mistaken, that was all."

"That was Miss Caverhill. She is a great heiress, I hear. Has more money than she knows what to do with. You've heard of her I suppose? She is a granddaughter of old miser Corbett, who was found murdered about a month ago," he paused to see what effect his words had produced, but the other sat sullen and silent, evincing not the least interest in what had been said.

"I hear that the brother is to be tried for the murder of the old man. But there is a detective fellow about somewhere, that don't believe that he is the one that committed the crime."

At last the man with the gold in his teeth was interested. He sat upright, a haunted look in his eyes, as he cast a curious glance at his companion.

"These detectives are a mighty queer lot, and get strange ideas. They just like to be contrary, and never think like any one else," with an angry gleam in his eyes.

"I reckon your're right. They are a queer set, and once they get after such gentlemen as you and me, it means either our six feet of sod sooner than we care for, or a home for life in the State hotel," with a light, careless laugh at the discomfiture of the others.

"The devil take them! They are always meddling in other people's affairs!" pacing the floor of the room, much agitated.

"Don't take it to heart so badly, comrade," the other said, jestingly. "I am going for a stroll, and something to sleep on, won't you come, too?"

"Not me; I won't stir out tonight. I'm not feeling exactly well. I think I'll turn in early," wiping the perspiration from his brow.

As the other left the room he walked briskly down the stairs, a peculiar light in his shrewd, dark eyes. At the door he glanced up and down the street, then beckoned to a man to approach.

"You know your orders, Jack. But I don't think you will have any trouble. Keep a sharp lookout, however."

"Yes, sir, I understand," the newcomer answered with a pleasant nod.

The man took up his position a few doors away, while the other, with an easy, swinging gait, disappeared down the street.

CHAPTER XI.

At last the eventful day dawned, the courtroom was packed to its utmost capacity with fashionably-attired, aristocratic men and women from Boston's most select society.

The prisoner, dignified and serious, smiled a sad recognition to his acquaintances as he entered the courtroom. Beside him sat his sister, hopeful and courageous. Her fresh, young face kept turning toward him with words of assurance and hope. Many whispered comments were heard in the courtroom, about the lovely young heiress, who was so bravely defending her accused brother.

Beautiful Alice Caverhill never looked more charming that she did that eventful day. The white, satiny skin looked almost transparent against the dead blackness of her mourning gown. The eyes, clear and brilliant, with a depth of love and pity in them, kept turning yearningly toward the prisoner, with a look that brought sympathetic tears to the eyes of those who saw it.

A number of witnesses were examined, but their evidence proved of little value to either side.

Then Miss Caverhill was called to the stand. Every ear was strained, every voice hushed to catch the slightest sound.

Very briefly, and with composure, the brave girl related the all-important events of that fateful night.

"Miss Caverhill has not told us with whom she drove out the night of the murder, or explained her sudden change of mind concerning the intended visit," the counsel for the prosecution said, with a smile of conscious triumph as he played his trump card.

Poor Alice cast a beseeching look at Lawyer Brown and the great criminal lawyer from New York.

"We will excuse Miss Caverhill from relating that part of the story. There is a witness present who will tell us all about it," the New York lawyer said, with cool assurance.

The counsel for the prosecution objected. Then ensued a battle royal between the counsels for the prosecution and defense. After a hotly-contested battle, the celebrated criminal lawyer overcame the objections raised by the opposing counsel, and the witness was called.

The new witness was James Hawkes, a dissipated-looking individual, small in stature, with a shock of bright red hair. It was evident from his manner that he wasn't enjoying his present position. He kept shifting uneasily from one foot to the other, in a nervous, hesitating way, that called forth amused little titters from those assembled there.

"Now, Jim, we want you to tell us what happened on the night of November third," the New York lawyer said.

"Well, yer honor, the most important thing that happened to meself was being nigh froze to death, and in a mighty bad way for a drop of 'O be joyful.'"

"I see," the lawyer observed, sympathetically. "Tell us how it happened."

"Well, you see, it was this way: Sometimes if luck is good and coin plenty, I gets on a little spree. Nothing to mention, you know, but just a little oncomfortable toward the last," he added hastily.

"I see, we're all liable to those attacks at times," the lawyer said, with a quiet, encouraging smile.

Greatly encouraged and feeling more at his ease, the witness continued:

"Ye see, then, it was while feeling oncomfortable that I crawled into the back of a buggy in Harkens' livery stable, and fell asleep. The next thing I remember we were going like blazes, and a man and woman were sitting in the seat. I didn't know what to do, and not feeling exactly well, I thought I would stay where I was. I could hear them talking low and easy like, and the man's arm was about the gal's waist. It weren't long till she began to cry, and asked him to take her home again. The man pleaded and begged her to go with him, but she wouldn't no how; said as how she must go back to her grandfather, who was old and needed her care. Then he began to get angry with her, and told her she was making a fool of him, promising to go with him and then turning back. But I don't believe he was so very angry after all, he loved her too much for that."

"Did he take the lady home, then?" the lawyer asked.

"Yes, yer honor, he left her at the gate, and they parted sort of crusty-like. But I believe it hurt her as bad as it did him. I know he cried like a baby, on the way back to Harkens' livery stable."

"Did you recognize the lady and gentleman?" the lawyer asked.

"Yes, yer honor. The lady was Miss Caverhill, granddaughter of old man Corbett, as was murdered."

The witness paused for a moment and looked around at the lovely, crimson face of

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Alice Caverhill, as she strove to appear calm and self-possessed.

"You haven't told us who the gentleman was," the counsel for the prosecution prompted.

"Sure enough, yer honor; I was forgetting that. The man was that artist chap that was always painting on a rag. I often seed him and Miss Alice out walking of an evening, and knew him pretty well, Gerald Ashton, they called him."

"And you believe Mr. Ashton was in love with Miss Caverhill?" the attorney for the other side asked.

Mr. Brown interposed, but the other insisted.

"Well, I would say he was in earnest, sure 'nough," with a sly smile. "I know I felt sure at the time that he was feeling just as I did when Sara Ann said she wouldn't have me. I have never got over that yet, your honor, and I don't believe I ever will, unless Sara Ann marries me."

A ripple of laughter ran through the room, but was quickly suppressed by the stern-visaged judge.

As the witness stepped from the stand, a stir and unusual commotion was heard at the door, and a tall, strikingly-handsome figure came rapidly toward the front.

"Your honor, gentlemen, I beg your pardon for this interruption. I chanced to see an account of the coming trial in a paper, and judged from its perusal that my testimony would be required. Your honor, it was I who drove Miss Caverhill out on the evening of November the third. My name is Gerald Ashton. I trust I have been in time to save Miss Caverhill from annoyance on the subject?" There was real anxiety on his handsome, manly face.

Turning toward the blushing girl, his fine eyes lit up with the unquestionable light of love.

"We are pleased to see you, Mr. Ashton," the judge said cordially.

"But our friend, Jim Hawkes, has just been telling us whom Miss Caverhill drove out with on that eventful night. It appears our friend crawled under the seat of the buggy to have a nap, and, consequently, heard all that passed."

The unexpected appearance of Gerald Ashton in that crowded courtroom caused quite a sensation. As he crossed over and shook hands with Alice Caverhill and the prisoner, all ears were strained to catch the slightest word. By the judge's permission he took a seat beside the radiant, blushing girl, who knew too little of the ways of the world to conceal her pleasure at seeing him again. And Gerald Ashton was content to sit by her side and listen attentively to the evidence of the different witnesses.

CHAPTER XII.

The trial was drawing to a close. There had been, comparatively, few witnesses to examine, and the trial was likely to close on the second day. The prospect of an acquittal seemed very remote, the future looked dark, even to the criminal lawyer, whose business it was to be hopeful to the very last.

The prisoner was placed on the stand, and told his story in a calm, composed manner. None knew better than he that there was little hope of an acquittal.

While the accused was still speaking, a messenger came hurriedly toward the judge, whispered a few eager, excited words, and withdrew. Almost immediately two men in police uniform came up the aisle, guarding a sullen-looking man, heavily-bound and handcuffed. Just behind them, alert and eager, came the dark-eyed, shrewd, little detective, Mr. Quicko.

"Your honor," the detective said, with a profound bow, "my excuse for this interruption is the man you see before you, the real murderer of the late Jacob Corbett!"

As the detective uttered this startling piece of news, the judge and lawyers, for once forgetful of their dignity, stood staring in open-mouthed wonder, startled, and incredulous.

The judge was the first to recover himself, and, remembering the importance and dignity of his office, resumed his seat. Clearing his throat, he said in a loud, sonorous voice:

"Gentlemen, if you have recovered sufficiently to resume your seats, we will hear what the gentleman has to say."

Half-ashamed and with a sheepish air, they sank into their seats.

"His honor is pleased to be unnecessarily severe, since he was surprised into forgetting, for a moment, the dignity due to the high office which he fills," the New York lawyer said, with keen sarcasm.

The white-haired judge did not deign to reply, but rapped impatiently on his desk. When absolute quiet was resumed, the judge asked in stern, measured tones:

"What proof do you give us of this man's guilt?"

"His own confession, your honor, and the bag of gold, and one of silver, that were stolen from the house where the crime was committed, found in his possession," the detective replied.

The shock of the unexpected turn of affairs proved too much for Miss Caverhill, after the suspense and anxiety of the last few weeks. With a little gasping sigh she fell forward, and was caught in the tender, willing arms of Gerald Ashton. Gentle sympathetic hands carried her unresisting form from the crowded courtroom, and laid her tenderly on a couch in a room adjoining.

When questioned regarding the crime, the man freely confessed all.

"Yes, I killed old miser Corbett," he said, sullenly. "I don't regret it either. I would do the same thing again!"

"But your motive for such a deed?" the judge asked, frowning darkly.

"He took our home from us, and turned my poor old mother on the street. I swore then that I would have his life, and I've kept my word." he said, in a hard, defiant tone.

"The late Mr. Corbett could not have taken your home from you unless the law justified him in so doing," his honor replied, in a stern, reproving voice.

"The law justifies many things that are cruel and needlessly inhuman. Old Corbett had a mortgage on our home. The day it fell due I had not the money to meet it, but a dealer promised to give me the money in three days to pay off old miser Corbett's claim. My mother explained the matter to him, but he was hard as rock, and refused to grant us the three days grace. My old mother, with all her worldly goods, was set on the street, and the key turned in the door of our home. Many times I have gone out to his house with the determination to fulfil my vow, but his granddaughter was always there. Somehow, the sight of that sweet, innocent face always changed my mind. On my last visit there, she was leaving the house, and I had the old miser at my mercy. You know the result," with a grim smile. "I ask only one favor from you," he went on, after a moment's hesitation, "and that is, that the end shall not be unnecessarily delayed. My mother taught me the justice of an eye for an eye. I am ready to pay the penalty of my act within the hour, if it can be conveniently arranged."

CHAPTER XIII.

"However did you come to suspect Tim Hall, Mr. Quicko?" George Caverhill asked, as he and the detective sat over their cigars in young Caverhill's private parlor, in one of the most fashionable hotels in Boston.

"It was mere child's play, Mr. Caverhill, one of the easiest cases I ever had. In the first place I knew there had been two men at the house—the police discredited the story your sister told about the second man, thought it mere fancy, I suppose—that night by the footprints in the snow. The police thought the tracks were those of the one man, because the boots were the same size, but I knew different. When you were arrested and your boots proved the exact size of the footmarks found in the snow, the police gave up the case, feeling sure you were the right man. Now, when I examined the prints in the fresh snow, leading to the house, I noticed that one of the men walked square on his feet. The square footmarks could not be found leaving the house. The other fellow went over a little, and by examining closely, I could see that the boot on the left foot had a small patch on the sole. The man wearing that boot went to the house and left it again—left it rather quicker than he came toward it. You see, then, it was reasonable to conclude that the man with the square step was hiding in the house, since his footmarks could not be found leaving it. The finding of the locket and hair, gave me a valuable clew. What more natural than that Miss Caverhill's brother should remain in the house till he could leave in safety? The night following the murder, I knew for a fact, that you were in the house. I saw your shadow on the blind in your sister's room.

"The day after I arrested you I was walking slowly along on the other side of Boston, thinking out the different points in the case. Just ahead of me there was a man, apparently in deep thought, too. I don't know what made me notice the mark of his boots, but I did so. Before me was the very man I was looking for! The footmarks were identical with those found in the snow going and returning from your grandfather's house. It was not difficult to get on intimate terms with the fellow. I didn't care to arrest him, you see, until I could discover where he had hid the gold and silver that was missing.

"The evening before the trial began, he and I were walking down-street together. A carriage stopped just opposite a drug-store, and a lady and gentleman stepped out. It was your sister and Mr. Brown. Miss Caverhill seemed to recognize Hall, the recognition was mutual, and Hall ran for it. Not caring to lose sight of him, I followed. Of course, I was disguised and your sister did not recognize me. You know what followed."

"But, why in thunder was it necessary to arrest me, if you were so sure the other was the man?" young Caverhill asked impatiently.

"Simply because if I hadn't arrested you, some one else would. It would have been impossible to escape. And, besides, you see, there is always the possibility of having been mistaken. It was easier to secure you then, than it would have been later, had you succeeded in escaping."

"Well, I am thankful it's all over. It seems like a horrible nightmare when I look back at it," he said with a shudder.

"You have one thing to be thankful for, Mr. Caverhill," the detective said, then paused to light a cigar.

"What is that?" the other asked in surprise.

"The truest, best, and prettiest sister that the sun ever shone on. No man that is worthy of the name, could have such a sister, and not be a better and a nobler man for her sake."

The tender earnestness of his voice touched the brother deeply.

"You're right, Quicko. It's not given to every man to have such a sister as mine."

With misty eyes, he drew from an inner pocket of his coat a long, legal-looking document, and held it toward the detective for inspection.

"I see," the detective observed, after glancing over the paper, "your sister has made your fortune equal to her own. This is a deed of gift of one-half of everything left to her by her grandfather, the late Jacob Corbett." The detective twirled his mustache and thought for a moment. "I trust, Mr. Caverhill, that you will not disappoint your sister in the future. I know she has high ideals, but try and live up to them."

"That is my determination for the future, Mr. Quicko. I have done with the empty, shallow life of the past. There are better things in this world than worshipping at the shrine of the god of vanity and pleasure. If my Maker spares my life, I will try and walk as He would have me. The troubles of the last few weeks have sobered me, and made me see the world in its true light. Formerly I looked at the world through a rainbow-tinted glass. But, thank God, that is past. I am not the fool that I once was."

Two months after Tim Hall expiated his crime on the gallows, Gerald Ashton and Alice Caverhill were made man and wife Mr. Ashton changed his mind and didn't go to India. Alice, more lovely and graceful than ever, was blissfully happy to have it so. She loved and reverenced her husband and was content.

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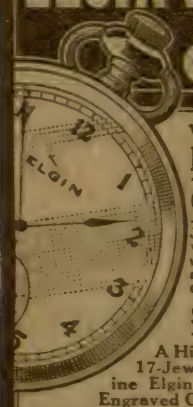

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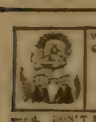

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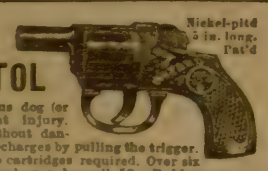

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TUGBOAT TOM;

Or, Capturing the Counterfeiters

By William R. Andrews

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CHAPTER XVII.

OVERHEARS A PLOT.

TOM and Bill looked at Julia.

"She's a trump," thought Tom. "That's the kind of a girl for me."

"Spunky little lassie," muttered Bill admiringly.

But there were objections to the girl's remaining on board, and they tried to change her mind. But Julia knew what she was about.

"Yes, I know," she said. "But the counterfeiters might escape before the police could get back here. I am going to run the tugboat while you and Bill Baxter go back to the tow and capture the men."

Tom and Bill smiled indulgently at this, and Julia, divining what was running in their minds, stamped her foot impatiently.

"You think I can't, eh?" she asked. "Just watch me!" And with this she ran to the steering wheel and took hold of the spokes like an old, experienced pilot.

They stood where they were and mutely watched her guide the craft as if she had been used to a tugboat all her life.

"There, Tom, how is that?" she cried delightedly. "You see that I can handle the boat good enough to look after it while you are gone, anyway. You see what it is to be an athletic girl, too. My golf and basketball had given me strength to recover from the hardships of the afternoon and evening in a way that I think astonishes even you."

"You certainly are a wonderful little girl," exclaimed Bill.

Tom wanted to express his admiration, but he did not dare trust himself to words.

But for all this extraordinary exhibition of female prowess he and Bill did not want to leave her alone on the tug while they were gone. But on the other hand they saw that she was a determined little thing, and that they would have to yield to her desires in the matter.

So they decided to go the tow and leave her in charge of the tug.

"Come, Bill, you put some coal on the fire and I will untie the motorboat."

"Aye, aye, Tom," said the engineer, "I suppose you'll let the motorboat drift back to the tow? Williams and Jake are probably on the lookout, and they would hear the noise of the engine."

"Yes, we've got to be very careful and not let them hear us."

"But, say, we forgot that the light from the chimney is apt to be turned on at any minute. Then where would we be?" asked Bill.

"I've thought of that, but it strikes me that something has happened to the furnace, or the light wouldn't have been shut off just when Williams needed it most," Tom replied. "I forgot to say that as I drifted away from the tow, Jake came running on deck and spoke excitedly to Williams, as if something had gone wrong."

"Oh, it don't matter one way or the other," declared Bill. "I meant for us to go anyway—but I just wondered, that's all."

They had left the pilot-house, Julia still holding the wheel, and they were now standing on the side of the deck where Tom had gone some minutes before to wet the piece of cloth.

But Tom was to meet with a great surprise. When he came to the spot where Bill had tied the little craft, he found that it had disappeared. He could hardly believe his senses. Kneeling close to the edge he felt along the side for the rope which had held the tow craft.

But there was no rope. Evidently it had got loose and the motorboat had drifted away. Thus the plan of boarding the tow by this means was suddenly checked, and Tom ran to the engine-room to tell Bill about it.

"Hey, what do you think?" he cried, poking his head inside the door. "The boat's gone!"

"Why, how's that?" exclaimed the engineer, coming quickly on deck. "I thought that I had tied her fast enough. But come to think of it the rope I used was new, and the knot must have slipped."

"Well, anyway, the boat's gone, and it looks as if we will have to run ashore with the tug," declared Tom. "But then that would hardly do. As soon as we get near land Williams and Jake could easily swim ashore."

Tom stood still a moment, thinking, then he suddenly went on.

"I have it, Bill. We'll cut the hawser, leave the tow in midstream, and go ashore in the tug. Those fellows can't get away until we come back."

This seemed the only solution of the difficulty, and Tom went into the pilot-house to find a knife. He told Julia of his intention, and she felt disappointed to think that her chance to help bag the criminals had vanished with the disappearance of the motorboat.

"I'm so sorry," she said. "Isn't there some way I could help?"

"Guess not," smiled Tom. "Only thing left is to take it easy till I get ashore. You must be tired standing at the wheel all this time. Let me have it, and you sit down awhile."

"All right, Tom," said Julia. "But I'm going outside to get the air for a moment or two."

She then left the pilot-house, and as she went out, Bill came in to consult with Tom. While they talked, Julia paced up and down, enjoying the refreshing breeze that had just sprung up.

On turning the third time toward the stern she heard a faint noise off in the direction of the tow. It excited her curiosity, and she hastened abaft to find out what it was.

Something told her, however, to keep within the deep shadows of the cabin, and it was well that she did. For the next minute she heard a boat bump softly against the tug. And then two men stepped lightly on deck of the tug. After tying the boat fast without making any unnecessary noise, they stood for some time talking in low tones close by. Nevertheless Julia was able to hear some of their conversation. It froze the blood in her veins, and she stood stock still, not daring to move.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A DASTARDLY PLAN.

The two were planning to capture those on board the tug, and wreak a horrible vengeance on Tom for foiling their schemes.

"Well, Jake, it was a good thing that the motorboat got loose and drifted back to the tow," began the first speaker, Williams.

"It was the only thing that saved us, captain. Otherwise we would have been cooped up on that elevator with no chance of getting away at all," replied the second person, who was no other than the man Jake. "But we have the upper hand again. The girl is ours, and we can do what we like with the boy and the engineer. They ought to be taught a good lesson," he added significantly.

"And they will, Jake, before I get through with them. But it is too bad that they won't have a chance to profit by the lesson in the future."

"No, why what do you mean?"

"Because they won't be here much longer. You see, I'm going to tie them hand and foot, take them on the tow, and leave them with the men when I touch off the dynamite."

"They deserve such punishment for butting in where they are not wanted," declared Jake callously. "How do you suppose the boy got wise to us and attempted to rescue the girl?"

"Guess he must have got curious and swam to the tow, and then overheard something. I noticed that he had on a bathing suit when he stood up in the motorboat as I fired at him."

Jake gave a grunt which might have meant anything, and then he asked Williams what they were to do next.

"You take one side and I will creep along this side of the deck," said Williams. "Have your pistol ready to get the drop on them."

The two men then separated and advanced stealthily on either side of the boat to the pilot-house. Neither realized, however, that their elbows had almost touched a horrified listener.

She pressed against the boards at her back and held her breath for fear that even her breathing might betray her presence. And while the two villains crept slowly toward their prey Julia wondered if there was any way she could warn Tom and Bill of their danger.

But it was too late now. And even if she cried out, Williams and Jake would have her friends covered with their weapons before they could turn around.

But her quick wit suggested a plan which she immediately executed.

Running to the stern where the rascals had come aboard she hastily untied the rope and jumped into the motorboat. As it cleared the tug she heard Williams cry out:

"Hands up!"

Julia looked over her shoulder, but the command was not meant for her. Tom and Bill were the ones who had been ordered to obey. So she felt there was still a chance to outwit the two villains.

Each of them had a pistol leveled at Tom's and Bill's head. And in the light streaming from the door of the pilot-house Julia saw every move of Williams, though she in turn was hidden from him in the enshrouding gloom. She next saw Williams step inside, and trembled for Tom's safety.

"I must get ashore and bring the police at once, or Tom and Bill will meet a horrible death," she gasped desperately.

Then, before the motorboat got out of ear-shot she heard Williams ask Tom where she was. And it occurred to her that the two men would not hurry back to the tow to carry out their plan of revenge until they had settled in their minds what had become of her, and what the prospect might be of getting their hands on her again.

Her surmise was right, for the first thing Williams asked was what had become of Julia.

Tom's denial of her whereabouts was not believed by Williams, and he began an immediate search of the tugboat for her. Tom, of course, was just as much surprised as Williams, when that worthy came back from a tour of the deck and reported her absence to Jake.

Tom, in his anxiety for her safety, could not help exclaiming: "Good heavens, where is she? She only stepped outside a moment ago. I hope she hasn't fallen overboard!"

The thought of such a catastrophe almost unnerved the lad, and his face became the picture of misery. His agitation was not lost on Williams, and he realized that something had occurred which neither Tom nor the engineer was aware of.

But shortly the mystery was cleared up, for Jake went out, and then came back after making an investigation on his own account. He was very much excited.

"Captain, captain!" he cried. "The motorboat has disappeared. It couldn't have got away unless some one untied the rope. I bet the young'un has skipped."

"Confound the luck! I guess you're right. The little minx is as slippery as an eel."

Then he turned and glared at Tom.

"Well, there wouldn't have been all this trouble except for you," he yelled savagely. "Now you're going to get yours."

"Do your worst, and don't talk so much about it," exclaimed Tom, defiantly. "Nothing that you can do frightens me. You're nothing but a low cur who hounds a helpless girl. Just remember that I have been trying to save Miss Julia from your clutches, and I am glad to know she has escaped at last."

Tom looked the fellow straight in the eyes, and his steady gaze made the villain quail. But Williams shortly recovered his nerve, and then gave expression to his feeling of triumph.

"You won't feel so courageous when you and your friend find yourselves lying beside a box of dynamite that's apt to go off any minute," sneered Williams.

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"You think so?" responded Tom with a contemptuous curl of his lips. "Well, we will see whether your threats are going to make either me or Bill Baxter afraid."

"That's just what will happen in just a short time from now," declared Williams with a frown. He then cast a meaning glance at Jake, who understood what was expected of him. Jake went over to Tom and searched him for any weapons. Next, he made a quick search of Bill's pockets to make sure that neither was armed.

He wouldn't have bothered to look for firearms on Tom, but the lad some time before had put on his coat, and Williams did not know but that the lad might have a pistol in one of the pockets.

After the search Williams went to the wheel and brought the tug round in the direction of the tow.

"When we come alongside, Jake, go on board quietly, for if any of the gang have come to and are on deck, we might have to do some unpleasant explaining," he said.

"Aye, aye, captain," answered Jake, as he ran to the bow to be on the lookout for signs of his former companions aboard the grain elevator.

CHAPTER XIX.
IN THE TOILS.

Williams then guided the tug close to the tow, and stopped the engine when it got near enough for Jake to jump aboard.

He lost no time in scrambling to the deck, and presently came back with a lantern.

"Everything is all right, captain," he explained, coming close to the vessel's side. "They're still stretched out on the floor, and won't wake up before the dynamite goes off."

"Good. Now watch these two men and see that they don't try to get away as they climb over the tow. Now, you both beat it to the deck," ordered Williams.

There was nothing else to do, with Jake's pistol pointed straight at them, so Tom and Bill obeyed.

Over the side they went without loss of time. Williams did not like the eager way, however, in which they made for the tow's deck.

"Here, you, not so fast," he shouted. And when they stood up he told them to stand where they were until he and Jake also got aboard.

Then down into the furnace-room they were driven, and when they reached the center of the floor Williams picked up a rope.

"Here, Jake, tie 'em up, hands and feet. Make a good job of it. Our own safety depends on whether they stay here or get away."

"Never fear, captain," responded Jake. "I realize as much as you what it means to us."

Jake showed that he was an expert in this sort of thing, and in a very short time had Bill and Tom trussed up like two turkeys.

Then they were thrown to the floor and left helpless on their backs.

Williams then began to look around in the corners of the room. Apparently what he wanted was not in plain sight.

Jake wondered what the man was searching for so anxiously, and in a tone of impatience, which angered Williams, inquired the cause of the delay.

"What do you suppose, you blockhead," he answered with irritation, "we've got to have a fuse to set off the dynamite, ain't we?"

When Williams found the object he was looking for, he called to Jake to follow him on deck, and started for the companionway.

Before mounting the steps, however, he turned for a final word to Tom and Bill.

"Good-by, my hearties," he exclaimed sarcastically. "Any message you want sent to the folks at home? Shall I say that you died bravely?"

The only answer was a look of contempt, and Williams added a parting shot he thought would heighten the straining uncertainty of the short time between the prisoners and death.

"This is a time fuse," he said. "But how long it will burn I don't intend to say. It may be an hour, then, again, only ten minutes. You can entertain yourselves the last few minutes on earth with guessing how long you have to live. Well, cheer up, the worst is yet to come."

Then, with a heartless laugh, he and Jake went out.

They made their exit in such a hurry that they left the door open.

The moment the two villains left, Tom and Bill, the lad and his partner, struggled to loosen their bonds.

"How are yours?" asked Tom, as he strained at the ropes on his own wrists.

"No use, blast 'em," responded Bill disgustedly.

Each turn and twist, instead of bringing them nearer freedom, made their wrists sore.

The ropes were new. They tore the skin and made it burn like fire. For five minutes they labored frantically, but in vain.

"Something must be done pretty soon," cried Tom, desperately. "No telling how short that fuse is."

"Run, run for your life," shouted Tom.

"We'll be all right if we can roll over and get to the wall. I see a piece of zinc on the bench, with an edge like a knife. Let's try to reach it."

They both suited their action to the words, and rolled over to the bench. But it wasn't done in a minute. They were obliged to wriggle their way slowly, each moment seeming like an hour.

But it was their only chance to escape the awful peril hanging over them.

Just then one of the men moved slightly. This gave Tom hope, and he shouted at the top of his voice, hoping to arouse him.

But the man had not yet fully recovered his senses, and his only response was a deep groan before he relapsed into complete silence.

Tom did not wait, however, to see what effect more shouting might have done, but moved fast as possible toward the bench.

Presently he got within a few inches of the wall near it. Then he backed against it and edged his way to a standing position by working his shoulders up the wall.

Soon he stood on his feet with his back to the bench, his eyes watching the hands of the clock on the other side of the room as they moved with deadly certainty to the unknown moment that meant death to all on board.

His fingers then found the sharp edge of the metal projecting from the bench, and he moved up and down with rapid sawlike motions.

But it was slow work, and only a few strands parted at a time.

Tom thought he never would cut the rope in time to save himself and his faithful old pal, Bill Baxter, from being blown up.

And indeed, if nothing else had happened to interfere shortly after, Tom and Bill, with the counterfeiters deserted by their treacherous leader, would never have left the tow alive.

Their rescue occurred rather unexpectedly shortly after Tom began sawing away again.

He was so bent on cutting the rope that he did not hear a sound outside which, however, had attracted the attention of Bill.

"What was that noise?" he exclaimed.

Tom stopped to listen.

A second later he smiled hopefully.

"It seems that we are going to be rescued, Bill," he declared hopefully.

"Hurrah!" cried the engineer.

Then he suddenly looked grave, for he noticed a deathly pallor overspread Tom's face.

In an instant he divined the cause, and he knew that Tom was thinking of what might happen to the rescuers at any moment.

"Good heavens, shout a warning for them to keep off before it is too late!" he cried hoarsely.

It looked, indeed, as if others were doomed to meet the same horrible fate designed for those on board the tow. But Tom, forgetting his own danger, thought only of saving others from death.

With an effort he regained control of his voice and yelled to the persons he knew must be outside.

"Keep off, keep off, or you will be blown up! Save yourselves! There is a box of dynamite aboard ready to go off any moment!" Then he stopped and listened to hear if his words were heeded.

Apparently they had made an impression, for the sound suddenly ceased.

Tom felt relieved more than if he had just been snatched from peril himself.

"Thank Heaven, Bill, the warning was heard in time!" exclaimed Tom in tones of relief.

But the lad's change of feeling did not last long, for the next moment he was startled by the bumping of some object against the side of the tow.

Both he and Bill knew only too well what it meant.

"Oh, this is terrible," he exclaimed. "They are coming after all. Hear the boat outside, Bill. Somebody is coming aboard. It must be the police sent by Miss Julia."

"Yes, it's a pity. Either they did not hear or they don't want to hear, and intend to run their heads into danger to save us."

The two prisoners shouted another warning, but it had no effect of deterring the newcomers.

And further, a light footstep was now heard on the staircase.

Tom and Bill expected to hear sounds of more than one person, but apparently only one of the rescuers was coming to the furnace-room.

And another thing puzzled Tom and Bill. The person did not walk with the heavy tread of a man. Who could it be? Not——

But there was no time for speculation, for the next moment the person who had come aboard regardless of the danger, burst into the room.

Tom and Bill gasped in surprise.

"Good heavens, it's Julia!" cried Tom and the old engineer in the same breath.

CHAPTER XX.
RESCUED.

"Run, run for your life!" shouted Tom. "The tow's got a box of dynamite aboard that's apt to blow up right away!"

"Tell me, quick, where it is," asked Julia breathlessly. "I know all about that, and I have come to save you."

"It's on deck in the rear," was the answer. "But don't risk staying a moment. Go before it is too late!"

But his warning was not heeded.

Instead of doing what she was told, the intrepid girl flew back to the deck to find the dynamite.

Two steps at a time she bounded up the companionway, and when she got to the top she leaped to the box containing the explosive.

She grasped the fuse, which had burnt within an inch of the exploding cap, and flung it far into the river.

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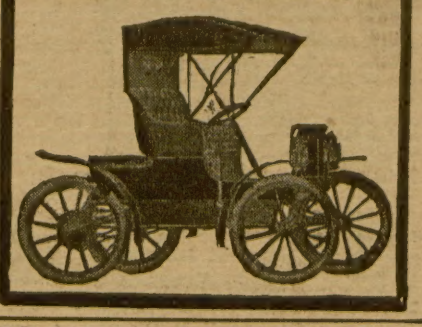

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"There, thank Heaven, I've saved Tom!" she gasped.

Then the heroic girl sat down on the deck completely exhausted by the terrible strain she had been under from the time she had overheard Williams and Jake planning their vengeance.

And now that she had foiled them, and knew that her friends were safe, a reaction set in, and the poor girl was on the verge of collapsing.

"But I can't stay here," she cried. "I must brace up, for the night's work is not over yet by any means."

So, by sheer will-power she drew herself together and started back to the furnace-room.

Step by step she made her way to the stairs. She walked so slowly that she did not make a noise. This was on account of her weakened condition, however, and not because she thought it necessary, to avoid making any unnecessary sound.

And it was well that she proceeded so quietly, for just then some surprising events were taking place in the furnace-room.

A second later she reached the bottom step and stood before the door, which was now closed.

Voices were heard inside, but neither Tom nor Bill was speaking.

Down the corridor she glided to the other door, through which a light was streaming at the round opening that enabled Tom, earlier in the evening, to look inside the room.

Julia peered through cautiously.

What she saw and heard sent a pang of apprehension through her heart.

Tom and Bill were almost is as bad a predicament as they had been half an hour before.

Three of the men, Jim, Hank, and one of the others had come out of their stupor, while Julia was on deck, and now they were staring about trying dimly to comprehend what had happened to their companions stretched on the floor.

Jim was speaking.

"Pretty powerful stuff——" he began.

He then suddenly stopped and stared ahead of him.

He was looking at the two men bound hand and foot among the rest of the gang.

"Gee whiz, what's been going on while we were asleep?" he exclaimed. "If there ain't the lad that the captain engaged to tow the elevator for us."

"Sure enough. And there is the old boy who tends the fire for him," declared Hank, rubbing his eyes and trying to collect his thoughts.

Tom groaned as if suffering considerable pain.

"Oh, will some one cut these ropes— they are tearing my wrists!" he cried.

And just as he expected, one of the men took a knife and released him from his bonds.

It was no sooner done than Hank ripped out an oath.

"You sleepy-head, Jim, what did you do that for?" he yelled. "Better wait until they give an account of themselves."

He was about to say more when Tom picked up a knife from the bench and quickly cut the rope on Bill Baxter's hands and feet.

This action aroused the three men to a realization that Tom and his friend wanted to be ready to get away, though the men did not know why, of course, they were there in the first place.

Hank picked up a bar of iron near him and advanced threateningly toward Tom.

"Now don't try to get away until we hear why you are here," he shouted.

"Yes, give an account of yourself," added the other man.

All this time Tom had been thinking quickly, trying to devise some means of escape from the clutches of the scoundrels gathered round him, but nothing definite had suggested itself as yet. So he tried to gain a few minutes.

So, when he was told to explain his presence there he smiled patronizingly and said:

"How do you suppose we got here?"

"That's what we want to know."

"Well, I didn't fly, that's certain."

"None of your lip, young feller," shouted Jim. "Tell us, and be quick about it."

"Well, I just walked in," answered Tom impudently. "I should think that you wouldn't need to be told that. Why aren't you curious about finding us two tied here hand and foot. That should seem more strange."

"We can guess how that happened," said Jim. "You probably came on board to pay us a visit. Then Williams and Jake spotted you, and trussed you up the way we just discovered you."

"Quite right," answered Tom. "But I bet you can't guess why we were tied hand and foot and left as we were?"

This question was greeted with loud guffaws.

"Laugh as much as you want to," said Tom, "but things will appear different when you hear something."

"What's that?" asked Jim. "When Williams comes back your case will be attended to, all right."

"But he won't come back," declared Tom.

"What do you mean?" they asked all at once.

"Just what I say. Williams has left the tow for good, and you will never see him again."

"That's too thin. What are you giving us a steer like that for. You don't think that we are going to let you get away?" sneered Jim.

"It isn't for that I am telling you. I just want you to know that the man whom you have such faith in has played a treacherous game with you."

"Prove it," they cried. "He ain't got any call to leave us in the lurch."

"Oh, you think so?" said Tom with a contemptuous smile. "Suppose he wanted to get all of the ransom money from the girl's father and not have to share it with you?"

"You seem to know a whole lot about our affairs," declared Jim, advancing toward Tom in a threatening manner.

But he was warned to stay where he was by one of the other men, who said:

"Wait a minute. Let the kid have his say."

"Why doesn't Williams show up?" asked Tom. "And where is Jake, too? If they had just stepped out on deck for a minute they ought to be back by this time. That looks funny."

"Well, what are you driving at," growled Jim. "Of course, they are around."

"Well, if you think so, take a look and find them," suggested Tom.

There was a note of sincerity in his voice which was not lost on his hearers, and they looked at one another as much as to say, "Perhaps there is something in what he says."

One of the men started for the door, but Tom told him to wait, as he had something further to say.

The lad then went over to the demijohn. He picked it up and pointed to the large quantity that still remained.

"See how much is left?" he asked. "You all have taken a few drinks, but not enough to make everybody fall asleep. And some of your friends are still lying on the floor not able to move. Does that mean anything to you?"

The point that Tom was trying to make was not lost upon them, and they exchanged glances. Then Jim spoke:

"We are wise to what you are hinting at, but that doesn't mean that Williams drugged us."

Tom did not answer the question directly, but clinched the suspicions he had aroused by asking some one to go and look for the two missing men.

He felt safe in urging this, for undoubtedly Julia had heard the sound of voices by this time and had taken precautionary measures to avoid being seen by any of the gang who should make his appearance above decks. He didn't want them to get too curious, however, about the motorboat, so he spoke of the absence of the two.

"Just see if the tug is still towing us," he said. "You won't find it in sight. When you discover that this is true you will believe what I say about the two men running off and leaving you all in the lurch."

"Why should it be necessary for him to do such a thing?" asked Jim.

"Because Jake said that the police were on his trail, and they are expected to arrive at any time. But that isn't all. Williams thought you might inform on him, and he intended to blow you up with dynamite."

"How do you know that?" asked the man stepping forward and looking at Tom incredulously.

"You seem to forget the box he had carried on deck awhile ago. Guess he wouldn't have had it put up there unless he had some purpose in view."

"Now I remember that he refused to explain why it was to go up there," said the third man, who had helped carry the box. "It looks as if the kid knows what he is talking about."

Already the man who had gone on deck to see if the tugboat was in sight, had made an observation above and now returned to report.

"The boy is right," he said. "The tug is nowhere in sight, and the tow is drifting downstream. And look at this in my hand."

He held up an object which made each man gasp with surprise.

Jim was the first to speak.

"Why, it is a dynamite fuse," he exclaimed.

And he was right. The man who had gone on deck had walked over to the box and found a piece of fuse which Julia had not seen when she threw the other overboard.

This was proof enough of Williams' evil intentions, and a feeling of rage surged through the crowd.

"We will kill the yellow whelp if we lay our hands on him!" they cried.

(Continued next week.)

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The Riddle of the Cliffs.

(Continued from page seven.)

er, to give up the mad search that has already cost the peace of mind of more than one of the Hastings blood. If he does not, tell him for me that the most unhappy day of his life—the most cursed of God—the one that will fairly send his unshriven soul to hell—will be the one that sees him set foot within the sleeping streets of the White City of Silence!' And after that she died."

For the first time in many minutes Morris Hastings spoke. "Why did she not tell my father all this?" he asked moodily.

"I do not know what her reasons were. I think that she fancied that her mother was delirious and she herself, as I have already told you, was practically under a vow. Besides, what good would it have done? Your father had consecrated his life to a vain search for the treasure-city. If she could have told him that the place had no existence outside of his uncle's diseased imagination—but you see, she could not tell him that."

He hesitated. "Go on," said Morris hurriedly.

"Your cousin knew you, Mr. Hastings—your faults as well as your virtues. She knew that you would never give up the property which your father, whether justly or unjustly, left to you, since in your veins as well as in her own, flowed the greed-poisoned Hastings blood. She asked me to say all this to you. So, on the night that you were to destroy the will—you and your sister—she abstracted it and left a skilfully-constructed copy in its place. And all this time she was seeking for the missing paper that concerned the White City of Silence. And at last—it was found!"

"Then my cousin——"

"Has the paper in her own possession? Yes. She wishes me to submit this proposition to you, Mr. Hastings, and she does it in obedience to the promptings of a most noble nature—a most generous heart. The paper concerning the White City of Silence, she has learned since seeing it, is quite as valueless to you as it is to her. It was meant to be a blessing and it has brought only a curse to the Hastings name. She will surrender it to you. Besides this, your grandfather's inheritance was large, and your father, by his exertions, practically doubled it, she will divide it with you so that you can share it equally. It is a generous concession, Mr. Hastings, and you will pardon me for saying it, I am sure—it is one which you have no right to ask and she is under no obligations under the circumstances to offer. You plotted——"

"I am tired and ill," said Morris Hastings suddenly. "Your words have taken me by surprise and I do not know just what to say. Will you give me a few moments to think it over, if you can? Believe me, I am not ungrateful to my cousin—for her generosity."

The lawyer looked at him sympathetically. "You may have all the time that you want, Mr. Hastings," he said kindly. "Believe me, your cousin means you nothing but good."

Morris Hastings had been walking restlessly up and down the floor. He paused suddenly. "Can you tell me where my cousin is?" he asked.

The question took the lawyer by surprise. His face flushed a little. "Frankly, I do not know," he said. "I have been in the village for a week and I received written instructions from her late this afternoon. I fancy that she was at the Cliffs when they were written. But, honestly, I am not sure."

"I do not like to deal with an agent when the principal is accessible," said Morris with a sad smile. "If you wanted to see Miss Hastings on important business and at once, can you tell me, without betraying any of my cousin's secrets, what you would do?"

"Do you mean that you would like to interview your cousin—now?" asked the lawyer relievedly. "If that is the cause of your question I will answer it frankly. May I ask you to excuse me for a little while?"

Morris Hastings nodded. "I will excuse you then, Mr. Hartsfield," he said gravely. "And I hope that you will allow me before you go to thank you most sincerely for the kindly and delicate way in which you have discharged a most unpleasant duty."

The lawyer bowed and the two men clasped hands. Then he turned to go. As he reached the door Morris Hastings called him back.

"There is one more question which I should like to ask you," he said gently, "and that is in regard to a person whose name has not been mentioned between us. That is the nurse, Mrs. Machan. Has she been concerned in this matter in any way?"

"She was employed as a spy by your cousin some time ago," said Hartsfield, "although she never knew the name or the sex of her employer. It was not thought best to trust her too far and it was soon found that she was too old to be of very much help. She was merely told that she was to search for a lost paper of some value. Latterly I think that your cousin suspected that she was inclined to play a double game and she threw her over. The day of the funeral, I think," he added. "I came here one night in response to your cousin's signal, but her conduct had awakened suspicion or else a more skilful watcher was on our track. We narrowly escaped detection."

He smiled a little as he turned again, and going out, closed the door behind him.

This mysterious story will be continued in next week's Ledger. Watch the Ledger in the coming months and you will find in it some of the most interesting stories ever written. With every month we will try to give you a better and more interesting paper, so, if you are not already a subscriber, you better send in a year's subscription and have the Ledger regularly. Take our advice and attend to this today.

Point of View.

Clarice—It isn't what a man earns that makes him rich, you know, Clarence.

Clarence—No. It's what is saved—by his father.

A Little to One Side.

"You think you have unusual presence of mind?" said Mrs. Jenks to her husband, in a tone which was somewhat tinged by the recollection of her recent wrongs connected with a forgotten basket of kindlings.

"I do, in reason," said Mr. Jenks, boldly, turning his back to the woodbox.

"Humph!" said Mrs. Jenks. "Well, while you've been two hours and a half at the store getting me a yeast-cake I've been reading the paper a few minutes to rest my back after doing a lot of work no woman ought to have put on her; and I've been reading of a man that really had presence of mind. What should you do first off if you saw a man fall out of a balloon way up in the air?"

"First off," said Mr. Jenks, turning a calm gaze on his inquisitor, "I should wait to see where he landed, meanwhile standing from under, if possible."

Not Encouraging.

"When angry, Willie, you should always count ten before you say a word."

"Yes, ma, I tried that once and Jimmy Brown hit me so hard I counted ten stars."

Shook Them Up.

Mr. Traveler—I thought I ordered fried eggs?

Waiter—You did, sir, but the roadbed is so rough on this line that we can't serve anything but scrambled eggs.

Precisely.

Mr. Borely—Then I am to understand, Miss Petite, that you care for me a little?

Miss Petite—Oh, yes; very little.

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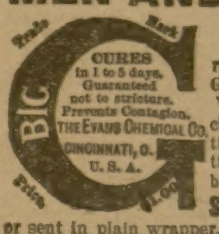

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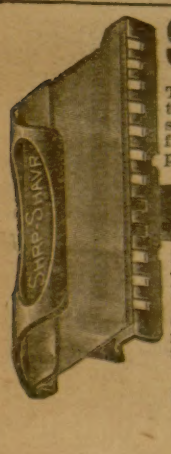

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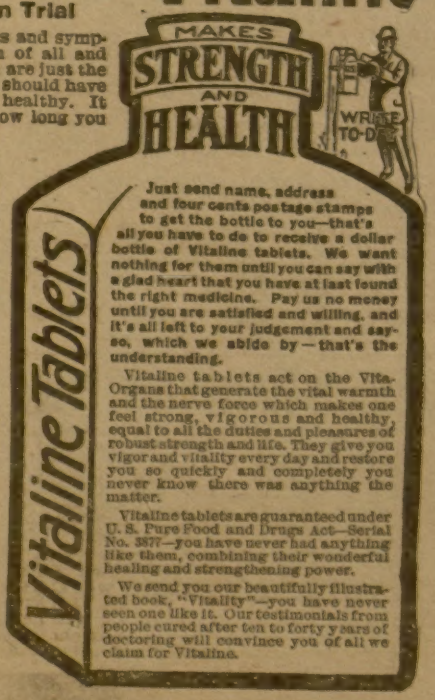

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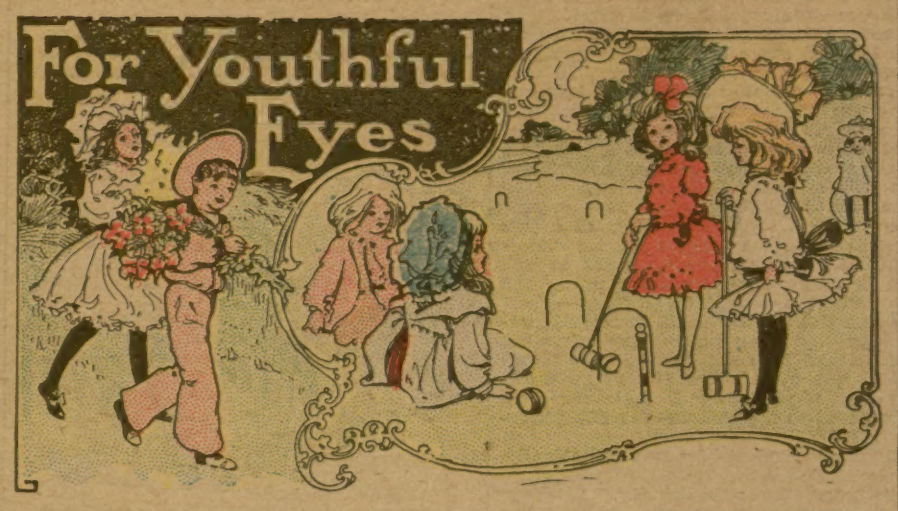

Help the Horses.

A note to the editor from the Children's National Humane Society says:

Let us especially remember our friends, the horses. What can each one of us do to show our love for them and to protect them from the cruelties of the weather and careless drivers? We can do this:

Those of us who live in the country and have to do with horses ourselves can at least see that they are blanketed when standing still, and have not the wind blowing on their chests. Would you not feel cold after a long run to stand still, with a biting wind blowing upon your chest? We who live where slippery streets and roads cause many falls and injuries to our brothers, the horses, can see that ashes or sand are spread on slippery spots. Or when a horse falls and cannot regain his footing because of the ice, do not say "Poor, poor old horse," and shut your eyes and pass by. It shows you have a tender heart, to pity the horse; but pity without help is of no use. Instead of closing your eyes, say to the driver:

"Wait a minute; I'll get some ashes so the horse can get a foothold."

Then run to the nearest house and ask politely if they will kindly let you have some ashes to assist the horse to rise. That will be a help to our friend the horse, and your heart will glow with the warmth of having done a kind deed. If there is a slippery hill in front of your house, why not organize a brigade of kind-hearted boys and girls to carry out ashes to cover a part of the hill, making it safe traveling for the horses? We know a woman who last winter carried out pail after pail of ashes and made a safe path for a whole block on a slippery hill. And she felt more than repaid by the comfort of the horses and thanks of the drivers. Can you not do as much?

Cold-House Flowers.

Artificial cold is a new comfort and has produced the cold house as an efficient auxiliary to the hot house, in the supply of flowers. The horticulturist now retards the blooming of flowers as nature does in the Northern regions, by means of cold. The process, supplied wholesale, in England especially, and in Germany and Holland, has given birth to a new horticultural method.

In February and March, spireas, azaleas, Chinese plum trees, tufts of deutzia, shoots of lilies of the valley, lilies and roses are torn from the ground and placed in a cold, dark chamber and kept at an even temperature of 25 or 26 degrees centigrade. During the whole summer this slight frost prolongs their sleep. At the approach of the early frosts they are reawakened from their slumbers in a well-warmed greenhouse, and in November and December burst into resplendent and vigorous blossom.

In the same way the cold prolongs the existence of short-lived gladioli, carnations, hyacinths and lilies, keeping them in bud during many weeks. After a month or forty days of preservation these flowers, when cut and exposed to the air, last almost as long as if they had just been picked.

The little edelweiss will soon lose its prestige, when, following the example of the Danish horticulturist, the gardeners reproduce the delicate flora of the glaciers by freezing artificially under a thin layer the soil which bears them.

Why It Groaned.

There is an old story, brief but instinct with a dread warning which it may not be out of place to recall for those who have never heard it:

A boy had wandered into an orchard one windy day late in the spring. He stopped under a gnarled old apple-tree which under the pressure of the strong blast, was swaying and creaking and moaning as if in greatest agony.

"What on earth are you making all that fuss about?" the boy asked, in some derision. "Your moaning and groaning is enough to make a black cat turn pale."

"O-o-o-oh," creaked the tree dismally, "I guess if you were as full of green apples as I am, you'd moan and groan, too."

CAUTION!

Mrs. Raccoon—For goodness' sake, children, make less noise! There goes the man who wears your father!

About Soft-Shell Crabs.

Many people believe that the hard-shelled crab and the soft-shelled crab are two different species. This is not so. The shell fish thus distinguished are merely two conditions of the same species.

Once a year the crab sheds its hard outer coat, much as does a snake, in order to give itself room for greater growth. When it gets ready to make the transformation, it sidles in close to shore, where the water at low tide will just cover it, and where it is comparatively safe from its maritime enemies. Then, while it is half buried in the sand, its shell splits open behind, and it painfully crawls out. A new coat, as soft as skin, is already well started. But until it shall have become fairly hard, the crab stays almost motionless in the shoals. While it is in this condition its pincers are useless, and, it falls an easy prey to the most insignificant enemy which happens upon it.

There is no particular time of year chosen by the crab for the metamorphosis. All through the twelve months fisher lads and barefoot fishermen wading with their baskets along the shore at low tide gather the helpless crabs, which fetch a high price in the markets. In their soft state they are worth from four to five times their price when in their natural hard condition.

"I saw your mother going to the neighbors' as I crossed the street. When will she be home?" asked the lady caller.

"She said she'd be back just's soon as you left," answered truthful Jimmie.

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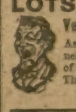

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